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They saw the body lying in the field.

TELLTALE FOOTPRINTS

-:- Or, -:-

A Ranch Tragedy

By Wilder Anthony

CHAPTER I

TENSE and quivering as a taut bowstring, the jack rabbit stretched upward, gazing in all-absorbing fascination, when a series of shrill yelps broke the morning quiet, and a dog shot out of the timber and darted toward him. As tho propelled by the spring of a catapult the rabbit came to life and crossed the snowy meadow in a dozen magnificent leaps, which carried him directly past the huddled object he had been watching so curiously and into the timber on the farther side, while the dog from the silent house two hundred yards away chased hopelessly in his rear.

When he saw the big rabbit's stubby tail flirt saucily into a hole beneath the roots of a giant pine, the terrier barked his anger and disgust and trotted back into the meadow. Long experience had taught him that the chase was over for that day, and he was already a little disgusted at that sudden fit of energy which had taken him from his warm nest under the house porch out into the snow and cold. He was in the act of turning homeward, when his sharp eyes and inquisitive nose warned him of that dark huddled object in the field and he trotted toward it eagerly. For an instant he sniffed suspiciously; then he raised his voice in a long-drawn wailing howl.

Simeon Flagg, old, bent, and doddering, paused in the act of shaking down the kitchen range, and listened intently for a moment. Then he shuffled across the room and peered thru a frost-whitened window. Two hundred yards away

near the center of the meadow his old eyes made out the dog, sitting on his haunches and howling lustily, while a few feet beyond was a dark mass which he could not plainly distinguish. For several minutes he stared in the senile, slow-thinking manner of the very old; finally, grumbling under his breath, he pulled on a pair of overshoes and a faded mackinaw and hobbled out into the yard.

As the old man labored up the hill thru the ankle-deep snow, mumbling irritably to himself, the terrier stopped howling and ran thru the snow, wagging his stump of a tail and showing by every means in his power his delight at his master's approach. After a short bound forward and then back to the man's side, the intelligent animal urged Simeon onward until his near-sighted eyes could make out the thing in the snow for themselves. When this happened the old man forgot his rheumatism and ran forward with a choking little cry of surprise.

Lying there in the soft snow, flat on his face, with his head doubled under him in a horribly suggestive manner, was a man. One arm was bent under his body; the other was outstretched as tho to ward off a blow, while the legs were sprawled out and twisted in the snow. The man was stone dead! Something told Simeon Flagg that instantly, as he there stood looking at the evidence of violence, and the surface of the snow for yards in all directions was unbroken save by the old man's own tracks and a crooked line of footprints which led from the trees to within a few feet of the body. For several seconds the old man stared with horrified eyes; then he turned and spoke back to the house as fast as his rheumatism would allow him, entering the kitchen in a flurry of excitement.

At his entrance, a lean, gray woman with a harsh, sour face turned on him crossly.

"Where you been, Sim?" she demanded, in a high falsetto. "Gallivantin' round in the snow an' cold at your age —seems like you'd have more sense! You'll get as bad as that fool pup, only he ain't expected to know better."

"It's murder, Annie!" the old man panted, stepping into a chair, while the terrier, wise beyond his years, crept under the table and began to lick his feet. "What's a-doin' out there in the field."

"Murder—a dead man!" Mrs. Flagg's mouth opened so far in her surprise that a set of false upper teeth nearly fell out of it.

"He's dead all right," her husband, serenely elated at the consternation he had aroused, went on with his news. "It's a murder I ain't noways certain of, altho I don't see how he could be there in the shape he is from the storm. He must 'a come there since the storm last night."

"I'll not be entertained, Sim Flagg!" The woman clicked her teeth into their place with her tongue, and there was a delighted gleam of interest in her eyes as she spoke.

"Nope; it ain't him." Simeon answered her unfinished question with a chuckle. "It's a younger man an' a stranger, I should say, tho I didn't stop to look at his face. I know what your curiosity is, Annie, the feelin' myself when I first glimpsed it; but Mr. Larabee must of been held up by the storm last night, that's why he didn't come like he said he would, I reckon. I'll have to 'phone him right away about this matter, I s'pose. The police'll have to be told."

"An' what about her?" Mrs. Flagg jerked her head toward the northwestern regions of the house as she spoke. "She'll have to be got rid of somehow before the police come. I'm not goin' to let that pesky sheriff find her here."

"I guess I'd better wake her while you're gettin' breakfast, Annie." Her husband rose to his feet and started toward the stairs. "She's got a hour yet before the interurban comes, an' then she can be safe in town by the time the sheriff can start. The hoss'd be wild if strangers was about when he come. I'll tell 'em. I only hope we don't get into no trouble over it."

He began a slow ascent toward the upper hall and finally stopped in front of a closed door. He was compelled to knock rapidly three times before, with a fierce, contralto voice demanded to know what he wanted. After that he was kept waiting for several minutes; but finally there were sounds of moving inside the room and the door was flung part way open.

"Well, what do you want now?" the girl demanded, in an exceedingly irritable tone. Then, as words penetrated into a highly manicured hand, "Mr. Larabee shall certainly hear of this—waking me out of my sound sleep at this unearthly hour. What is the matter?"

"Matter enough, miss," Simeon answered dryly, in no way abashed at his reception, as he gazed stolidly at the girl's pretty face and extremely decollete costume. "If you take my advice you'll hurry into your clothes an' leave this house as soon as may be. A man was killed in the field yonder last night, an' Mr. Larabee ain't showed up at all. I'll have to telephone the sheriff an' he'll come out right away most likely. It wouldn't hardly do if he found you here."

"A dead man—here!" The girl's face, which had been slightly flushed with sleep and irritation at being awakened so rudely, went white as chalk, and she clutched convulsively at the neck of her kimono. "Surely you're joking, old man. Who could have been killed in this lonely spot?"

"I don't know, miss; but it's truth I'm tellin' you. The man—a stranger—is out there in the snow. I can't tell any more. Mr. Larabee must be notified an'—"

"Wait a minute!" The girl turned back into the room, hastily began to throw on her outer garments, dressing with a speed which she would have deemed impossible in calmer moments. In an incredibly short time, cloaked and hooded, she stepped out into the hall and seized the surprised caretaker by the arm.

"Take me to the body," she ordered. "Do you hear me? Be quick! I must see him!"

Simeon stared at her hesitatingly for an instant. He wanted to make a number of—in his own opinion—very good objections to such a proceeding; but he couldn't, somehow. For the moment the girl completely dominated him; and he suddenly remembered that his master had given orders that she should be humored. Grumbling under his breath, he allowed her to hurry him downstairs past the dumbfounded aunt and into the field where the body lay.

For a few seconds the girl looked down on the dead man, as he lay with face buried in the snow, in a species of horrible dread. Then, with a shuddering cry she stooped and lifted his head. For a flash she gazed into the ghastly face and eyes; but after one look she gently laid the head back in the snow and turned away. Covering her face with her hands, she began to sob violently, while old Simeon looked on in amazement.

"It's him—I'd already guessed it," she moaned. "Dead! Dead! I knew no good would come of it—I knew—oh, my God!"

Simeon Flagg's old eyes blinked craftily and he took a step toward her.

"You know him?" he questioned tensely. "Who is he, miss?"

"Of course, I know him. Why, he was my——" She dropped her hands suddenly and looked at the old man's face at the caretaker; noting the avid, curious gleam in his watery eyes, she came to herself with a jerk. "Who is he—why, I don't know him! How absurd!" she exclaimed. "Why should I? I was shocked, that's all. Please take me back to the house. I—I've seen quite enough, and it's terribly cold."

Without uttering another word she set off at once, toward the house at a rapid walk. For a little Simeon stared after her, mumbling over and over to himself in astonishment at her actions; then he, too, hurried toward the house as fast as his old legs would carry him.

The girl went directly upstairs to her room and there herself into a chair, where she sat motionless for an hour, even when the caretaker mounted to her.

"Well," he grunted, "I guess that's enough now, I 'spose, miss. You'd better hurry. The interurban'll pass the foot of the road in 'bout 20 minutes, so you ain't got no time to waste."

"I shall stop right here for the present," was her astounding answer. "You should have noticed on that half-empty car this early in the morning, Simeon, that somebody was there at the murder. I'm safer here, and besides, I've done nothing to run from. Nobody knows who I am except for you, and that spectacled little sheriff will never think of looking up such a person as you give me away, and you daren't do that. No, old man, I shall stay here for the present, and you'll tell him that Mr. Larabee you might tell him that I am here."

Simeon regarded her for a long moment in silence, while his dull, moving wits groped blindly with half a dozen twisted thoughts. He was just opening his mouth to speak, when the girl, utterly regardless of his presence in the open doorway, began to pull off her clothing with the very evident intention of returning to bed. Shaking his head hopelessly, the old man hobbled downstairs to tell his curious wife all that had happened.

Half an hour later, after having vainly tried to get the sheriff on the 'phone, he called up Sheriff Parker and reported his discovery of the body.

CHAPTER II.

DOCTOR MORSE stooped and grasped the body by the shoulders, while the sheriff and Big Jase (the huge negro deaf-mute who had been the sheriff's body-servant and almost constant companion for years) looked on interestedly; and, standing a little to one side, Simeon Flagg eagerly watched the officers from under the low-pulled brim of an old felt hat. The dead man was turned over and his face became visible, the onlookers gave little starts of horror; while the coroner, hardened to death in all its forms, grew very grim about the eyes and mouth. The upper part of the dead face, which had been partially shielded by a fur cap, was covered with a thick scum of congealed and frozen blood and the lower jaw was horribly crushed. Looking at his face, one got the impression that the man's head had been literally driven in between his shoulders.

"Fractured skull—broken neck," Doctor Morse muttered jerkily, as his active fingers deftly explored the body, "right shoulder dislocated, too; looks as tho a steam engine had run over him. Death must have been instantaneous. Body frozen almost solid—must have been here several hours, at least. Well, sheriff, what I should say; his hands show signs of hard labor—they go with his clothes. Body is about all I can say now, Bert; it's up to you."

Sheriff Herbert Parker regarded the remains in speculative silence from his thick-lensed spectacles which he always wore and which gave him the appearance of a studious scholar rather than officer. He was a small-framed, sinewy little man, with a square, clean-shaven chin and serene face which he had a habit of talking and moving as quietly and unobtrusively as a mouse. A stranger, seeing him for the first time, would never have guessed that he was looking at the most efficient detective and one of the most courageous men in that part of the country. Just now the sheriff seemed to be in a particularly introspective mood.

"From what you say, Horace," he remarked, at length, shifting his gaze from the body to the coroner's face, "it would seem to indicate rather that the victim of a very brutal assault or an extremely violent accident, and since an accident is out of the question in this secluded spot, we'll take the assault for granted. You say the man has been dead about 12 hours, but he's become here then soon after the storm ended last night. It snowed until after midnight, I believe; but the body has no snow on top of it."

"Of course; that's all plain enough," the coroner replied, "and the man's footprints point to the same conclusion —they've not been snowed in. But his appearance suggests the question if he struck those blows he was an infernally strong fellow."

"Very true; but we have no evidence as yet which shows how the blows were delivered. There is nothing in the nature of a weapon lying about and absolutely no signs of a struggle. We must not jump to conclusions, Horace. Those tracks, for instance, we must examine them."

Walking over to the trail which zigzagged out from the pines across the meadow, Sheriff Parker knelt in the snow and examined several of the most distinct footprints with a pocket tape. When he had jotted the figures thus obtained in his notebook, he moved over to the body and repeated the operation on the dead man's feet; then he dusted the snow from the knees of his trousers and proceeded to follow the trail thru the trees and down the slope until it ended abruptly at the electric line. For a minute or two he there stood still there, tapping his teeth with the end of his pencil; but finally he retraced his steps to the spot where lay the meadow.

"It's odd," he was thinking, "mighty odd. The maker of this trail wore overshoes, while the body yonder does not. A good-size difference in the feet, too. I wonder if that's truth——"

He stopped suddenly and closely scrutinized the footprints at the extreme end of the trail which stopped about a dozen feet from where the dead man lay. For a space, lips slightly pursed and head cocked a little to one side in the manner of an inquisitive bird, the sheriff studied the prints and the unbroken surface of the snow between them and the body; then he let his eyes wander over the field until they finally came to rest on the bowlder that had sheltered the rabbit earlier in the morning. Something there seemed to interest him, for he crossed over to the rock and carefully examined a jagged rent in the snow on its surface. At last he rose abruptly and old Simeon, who had been watching him keenly all the time.

"You told me, I think," he began quietly, "that Mr. Larabee was expected here last night, but did not come. What time should he have arrived?"

"He most always comes out on the last car, sir, when he comes at night," the caretaker answered, feeling a little inward thrill at his own importance as the discoverer of the body and the one to whom the law must turn for direct information.

"You've no idea why he didn't come last night, I suppose?"

"None, sir. He telephoned me to prepare for him; but when he didn't come we figured he changed his mind on account of the storm."

"Have you notified him of this?" Sheriff Parker glanced down toward the body.

"No, sir; I tried to, sir, but I couldn't get him on the telephone, so I went right ahead an' called you."

"You did quite right. Now, answer me clearly, Flagg: You've already told me that you were the first to find this body; but are you sure you didn't leave out something? Did you throw anything on that rock yonder there, for instance?"

"No, sir." The caretaker was greatly surprised at this question and he looked at it. "I never noticed no rock, sir. You can see by my tracks in the snow where I come an' stood—I didn't even touch the body."

"You came alone?"

"I—yes, sir. Simeon gave a very perceptible start and began to look decidedly uncomfortable. The relentless questioning was weakening his nerve and he was badly afraid that he might say more than he meant to.

"So you told me once before, Flagg; but the snow does not agree with you. See those rock-shaped footprints—rock-prints—leading to and from the body, and when we got here the snow was disturbed at the base of the rock as some one had raised it not long before our arrival."

At his statement, which seemed to hint that all he had hitherto said about his visit to the scene of the death had been false, Simeon's face flushed. Roots of his thin gray hair and shuffled uneasily, while Doctor Morse smiled grimly. The sheriff's last words held many possibilities.

"Well, you see, sir," the old man floundered on, "I—I—I thought I struck with an inspiration went on more boldly. "It was the woman, sheriff. She come out to see the body, an' thought it was important enough to speak of. I 'spose she must of touched the head," he wound up ultimately.

"Ah, yes, I see," Sheriff Parker remarked dryly, while he and the coroner exchanged glances. "Mrs. Flagg's curiosity was very natural under the circumstances." He abruptly turned to Doctor Morse, who had been searching the dead man's pockets.

"Have you discovered any clew to his identity, Horace?" he asked.

"Nothing conclusive," was the reply, "altho this letter indicates that his name is Stronsky—Mike Stronsky. Beyond the letter there's nothing of value upon him."

"Humph!" grunted the sheriff, "it never hurt to look for more; you shall locate him if he has worked in the neighborhood. Well, I guess we've done everything there is for the present. Let's go back to the house. The body will be perfectly safe where it is until your men come for it."

As the little party tramped across the meadow thru the snow, which by now, melting fast, sheriff Parker dropped behind Doctor Morse and the caretaker and spoke a number of quick signs to Jase, who nodded and grinned broadly. Despite, or perhaps because of, his infirmity, the giant negro was gifted with a pair of abnormally keen eyes and long association with the sheriff had taught him the value of using them. Nothing pleased him so much as the opportunity of using his wits in his master's service, and his almost dogiike devotion had more than once been the means of saving that officer's life. As the four men entered the yard the negro headed toward a little by his stride and shot a quick glance upward at a closed window in the front of the house; then he followed the others around to the rear and inside.

"Quite a bit of excitement for you quiet country folk, Mrs. Flagg," Sheriff Parker remarked sociably, as he toasted his hands before the roaring wood fire in the kitchen. "You'll have plenty of callers here as soon as ever the reporters hear what has happened."

"Small good it'll do them," the woman declared, in a harsh tone. "I can tell 'em nothing, you may be sure, sir. Every day it's work for me an' I sleep sound of a night, the last night was different. We waited up thinkin' Mr. Larabee

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would come on the late car. It had stopped snowin' before we went to bed."

"And you saw or heard nothing unusual during the evening?" the officer asked casually, speaking as tho his mind was not on his speech and gazing absently round the room.

"We couldn't see nothing, sir. All night it was that dark an' cloudy that a body couldn't see from these windows to the barn even. An' I'm glad the dog barked this mornin' that we knew somethin' was wrong; but I did hear something. It was about ten minutes or such after the car passed an' Simeon was already goin' to bed when I heard a kind o' scuffle sound that died out in a minute or two. It seemed like it come from up overhead some place, sir, an' I put it down to the wind, tho I never heard no such sound before."

"Indeed?" Sheriff Parker seemed mildly interested, and he asked the woman the benefit of his undivided attention, when Doctor Morse gave a little exclamation of annoyance. He had been turning over the few odds and ends he had taken from the dead man's pockets, and several silver coins dropped to the floor.

Slight as was the sound, the lynx-eared sheriff turned instantly in its direction, and as he did so, Simeon Flagg, who had managed to jostle the coroner's elbow in an accidental manner, under the pretext of retrieving one of the coins, leaned over and whispered rapidly to his wife. By the time Parker turned back again the old man had straightened up with the coin in his fingers, and the incident apparently passed unnoticed, altho Big Jase, standing in a far corner, smiled faintly.

"Mr. Larabee is the habit of coming out here quite often, I understand?" the sheriff continued in a conversational tone, as he faced the woman again.

"Yes," she nodded, "he comes out Saturdays an' stays over Sundays. A rich man like him has lots of worries, I reckon, an' he says he enjys the rest an' my home cookin'. I was right scared for a spell, sir, when Sim told me what was out there in the field. That's the short cut Mr. Larabee always takes when he comes up from the car, an' I was afraid it might be him. That's why I insisted on runnin' out to see for my self. You see us strollin' of him ar' all, it did look at first like—"

"Quite so, quite so, Mrs. Flagg, I understand thoroly," the sheriff cut her short and faced the coroner. "Perhaps we'd better be on our way, Horace," he suggested. "These good people seem to know very little that can help us, and we can leave Jase in charge here until your men arrive. I may have to come back in a day or two; but I believe we can accomplish more in town just now." He was in the act of passing out of the room, when he stopped as the just smitten by a sudden thought.

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Flagg," he exclaimed, "I wonder if you have an old pair of overshoes about anywhere? I neglected to wear my rubbers when I left home, and my feet are now so damp that I'm afraid they'll get pretty chilly before we reach town. Mr. Larabee is about my size—an old pair of his would do nicely. I'll return them before they are needed."

"Yes, of course, sir," Simeon agreed heartily, glad to be rid of his inquisitive visitors at almost any price. "There's a pair of Mr. Larabee's in the hall closet —I'll get them for you."

During most of the two-hour drive back to Elktooth the two friends talked very little. Both seemed to be fully occupied with their own thoughts, and it was not until they were nearing the city that Sheriff Parker made any particular comment on the day's events.

"It's been an odd case, Horace," he remarked, at last. "It doesn't seem as tho Maxwell Larabee could be involved in the death of a man like this Stronsky, and yet Larabee was there at about the time of the killing."

"You don't say so, Bert! How do you know?" The coroner seemed very much surprised at his friend's statement.

"Footprints," was the laconic answer. "The trail ending at the front car line was made by Larabee himself. My measurements prove that—I've already tested them on one of his overshoes. At any rate, we shall settle the point beyond doubt before very long. The conductor of this owl car will know if Larabee was one of his passengers.

"There's something decidedly odd about those tracks, Horace. They're much shorter in the middle of the field at least twelve feet from the body. I don't mean that they turned back; they just ended! It seemed almost as tho the man had suddenly have sprouted wings and flown off into the ether—his tracks certainly stopped while he was in the act of taking a stride. Furthermore, Stronsky made no tracks of his own at all. If we did not have evidence to the contrary, nothing I should say that he arrived in the field before the snowfall."

Doctor Morse looked puzzled and for a minute or two he knit his brows in thought.

"Perhaps he was carried there," he hazarded, at last.

"Possibly," the sheriff dryly admitted, "but by whom? Simeon Flagg is too old and feeble for such a task, and Larabee is out of the question—his tracks do not go near enough to the body. No one else besides ourselves and the woman has been in that field since the storm—the snow is a guarantee of that much. And speaking of the woman, there's a mystery there, too. The woman who walked thru the snow and stooped over the body was not Mrs. Flagg—her foot is far too small and well-formed. Those people are hiding something, Horace. I'm really right curious to know what it can be."

"Great Heavens, Bert! You don't suppose that Larabee—"

"I haven't gone that far as yet; but you know Max Larabee's reputation as well as I do. Like many another better man he has a weakness—women. But we must wait. I'll have to have Jase there at the house with full instructions, and I shall be very much surprised if he hasn't a very interesting report a week-end outings of his had more behind them than the mere desire for rest and home cooking."

"I've thought of that, too," the coroner and showed him a note which had been left there that afternoon.

"To whom it may concern," the message ran, "this is to say that Maxwell Larabee is now safe and under close guard in a place we know of. Put $50,000 on the flat rock in the field near Larabee's farmhouse at dark on the night of the tenth, and Larabee will return home on the eleventh. No tricks! If you communicate with the police or try to find us we shall know what to do."

When he had read this strange epistle, which was typewritten and unsigned, Sheriff Parker looked intently at the man who had given it to him.

"How did this thing get into your hands?" he snapped.

"It was left at the door about two o'clock this afternoon by a messenger," the clerk answered. "We had thought nothing of Mr. Larabee's absence up to that time, as he expressed his intention yesterday of spending the week-end at his farm; but this note worries us. It must be a joke, of course, altho I thought you ought to see it—especially after what has happened."

"Humph!" The sheriff frowned abstractedly and turned the note over and

She arose and faced him scornfully.

confessed, "but you'll find Larabee a hard man to quiz, Bert. He knows a thing or two, and he's not apt to give away his private affairs. It's altogether possible, of course, that this mysterious woman has no connection with the tragedy, even tho she was in the house at the time it occurred. But if you knew she was there, why didn't you investigate the premises yourself?"

Sheriff Parker laughed softly as he guided his team into the outer fringe of the city.

"Because I want old Flagg and his amiable wife to think they've outwitted me," he replied. "Experience has taught me that it does no harm at times to appear a little dull. Remember, Horace, I've left Jase on guard, and you can be sure that he will not overlook much. He can't hear, you know, but he can read a person's lips very neatly; and if he is sufficiently persistent the Flaggs may talk in his presence. For the moment, I think that we can well afford to lie low."

CHAPTER III.

SHERIFF PARKER did not, however, have his expected interview with Maxwell Larabee. The latter could not be found either at his home or at his office, and none of his intimates had seen him since the close of the previous evening, altho the conductor of the midnight car stated positively that he had carried him out to his country place. It was at Larabee's office, however, that the sheriff learned something which caused him to pucker his brows in astonished perplexity.

He had gone there to inquire for the man he sought, when a worried-looking clerk ushered him into a private room over in his fingers. The message might be an ill-timed joke, as the clerk had hinted; but for his part he very much doubted it. To him it looked very much like a decidedly serious addition to the mystery.

"This messenger," he said finally, "you know and could identify him, I presume?"

"Yes, sir. He's from the regular city office and he's often been here before. His name is Meager, I believe."

"Very well. I shall make a point of seeing him as soon as possible. In the meantime, until you hear further from me, don't mention this occurrence to a soul. There may be more behind it than any of us guess at present; but that is for me to find out."

Sheriff Parker folded the note and placed it in his pocketbook; then he hurried to his own office in the basement of the courthouse building. When he arrived there he gave some brief instructions to one of his deputies, after which he crossed the hall to Doctor Morse's rooms.

"Something new and decidedly odd has turned up, Horace," he remarked quietly. "Max Larabee has apparently been kidnaped."

"What?" The coroner, who had been working at his desk, looked up in consternation. "You can't mean it, Bert. The thing is preposterous! Who would kidnap a grown man like Larabee in these times?"

"Heaven only knows, Horace!" The sheriff, now that he was behind closed doors with his friend, permitted himself to look a trifle worried. "Still, it appears to be a fact. At any rate, Larabee, so far as I can find out, has utterly disappeared, and this note was left at his office a few hours ago. It certainly complicates matters. Of course, it may be a hoax. It is even possible that Larabee may have written it himself in order to cover his tracks if he is concerned in Stronsky's death. He handed the folded note to the physician.

"Meaning that Larabee killed Stronsky," Doctor Morse cut in excitedly, "but that's foolish, Bert. Granting that he may be indirectly concerned in the affair, I'll swear he never struck those blows. The murderer of Stronsky was a powerful far beyond the ordinary. I'm sure of that much, at least."

Sheriff Parker smiled slightly to himself as his friend bent eagerly over the note; but he made no remark. His brain was already busy with half a dozen possible solutions of the problem.

"What have you decided to do, Bert?" the coroner demanded, after he had read the note.

"Nothing," the sheriff answered, "nothing, that is to say, until I know more than I do now. Today is only Saturday the sixth, and we have until Wednesday to consider these follows. It should be time enough. I know who handed in that note at Larabee's offices and I intend to find out what he knows before I go ahead. I think I shall return to the farm tonight—I've an idea that Jase may have found something report to make, and I want to see that woman. Now that Larabee has disappeared she is the only link in our chain. Ahl here he is now."

The last words were uttered as the door opened and a boy of about 18 entered the room, closely followed by the big deputy sheriff to whom Parker had talked half an hour before. The boy was pasty white and decidedly scared looking, and as he stood fingering his cap in the center of the room he shifted uneasily from one foot to the other, peering furtively before him in a dazed way, as tho half stupefied. Occasionally he sniffed audibly and rubbed at his twitching nostrils with the back of one skinny hand.

Sheriff Parker turned to Doctor Morse, who was writing at a desk, and asked, in a whisper: "You recognized the type, Horace?"

The physician nodded.

"It's a clear case, of course," he replied. "You'll find him an extremely artful liar. If you want the truth out of him it might be as well to lock him up for a day or two—they say it helps wonderfully."

Their voices were too low for even the ears of the deputy, who looked curiously at them, as he they whispered. At last the sheriff began his questioning.

"Your name is Meager—Daniel Meager?"

"Yessir."

"You left a note at the offices of Maxwell Larabee Co. early this afternoon. Where did you get it?"

"From my station, sir." The boy seemed to feel more at his ease, now that he thought he could see the drift of the officers' questions.

"No, you didn't," Sheriff Parker contradicted him flatly. "I've already made inquiries there, and your manager told me that you were not sent to Larabee's at all today. Think again, Meager, and tell me the truth this time."

Meager flushed a dull, unhealthy red and rubbed vigorously at his nose with one hand.

"Watcher want, anyhow?" he whined out suddenly. "I ain't done nothin'—help me, I ain't! Don't put me in jail to lock me up."

"I shall take that right," Sheriff Parker sternly retorted, "if you persist in lying, my lad. Tell me the truth, and I give you my word that you'll not be abused. Now, who gave you that note? Who gave you that note?"

"I got it from a woman," the boy answered quickly, evidently deciding that he was cornered. "I don't know who she was, boss, honest I don't. She was short an' fat, an' she was waitin' on the corner of Becker avenue when I was goin' back to the office after a call. She give me two bucks an' told me that paper an' keep my trap shut. That's the truth, boss. S'help me, it is!"

He began to sidle toward the door in his anxiety to get away; but the deputy fastened a big hand on his collar.

"Easy, there, my friend," he counseled, "you'd be going when you're told and not before."

Sheriff Parker eyed the lad thoughtfully. He had considerable experience with drug users, and he knew that they took to lying as naturally as a duck takes to water. The boy's story seemed plausible enough he was not at all sure that it was true. For the time being, however, he knew that Meager would either stick to it or invent another equally plausible tale; and there was no time to waste with him to pursue. He nodded to the deputy.

"You may take him away, Brannigan," he directed. "Keep him for a day or so without his 'coke' won't make him tell a different yarn."

Young Meager, protesting violently and calling upon the saints to witness his truthfulness, had been led out of the room, the sheriff turned to the coroner with a little shrug.

"Strange how they get it, isn't it?" he remarked. "No matter how hard we fight the thing, a fiend like that will turn up every little while. A few days without the drug, however, will bring him round; his imagination won't be

(Continued on Page 8.)

An Island Vendetta

-:- Or, -:-

Sea Prisoners

By Willard E. Hawkins

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CHAPTER VI.
PRISONER IN THE DARK.

THE futility of attempting to break the heavy timbers of the door was soon evidenced by the powerlessness of Matt's shoulders. His frantic efforts proving of no avail, he dropped limply on one of the rude steps. All his half-defined auguries of evil returned with added force. Everything tended to convince him that the girl had been left a defenseless victim of his half-brother's cunning, and yet——

Altho reason told him that the sudden advent of Reuel Vogt was the logical explanation for the closing of the door upon him, his mind persisted in striking off at wild tangents, seeking some other interpretation.

The basis of his whole distrust was centered in the strange conduct of Mrs. Leavering that afternoon. He had admitted even at the time that she did not carry out her part convincingly. She had not impressed him as a woman to be frightened into hysterics by an impudent vagabond whom she had demonstrated her ability to handle.

But this involuntary distrust, for which he almost hated himself, had nothing to do with the present situation. The fact remained that she had been left at the mercy of a man whom Matt knew to have no respect for human life or womanhood.

Roused to action by this thought, Matt threw himself once more against the unyielding timbers overhead. His futility was maddening. Altho his shoulders grew numb from the repeated assaults, his battering-ram crashes brought no other result. Giving up at last in despair, he sank back on the step, burying his head in his hands.

Presently he sat up, straining his ears intently, hoping to hear something to indicate how matters fared above ground. He heard, or imagined he heard, a noise—but it did not come from within. Possibly it was a rustling movement, possibly a psychic influence, that gave him the sensation of being not alone.

The silence was broken with startling suddenness. As the overhead door swung back, Matt sprang up the steps like a rocket.

"Gracious!" exclaimed the girl, tartly. "I didn't expect a human jack-in-the-box."

Matt stood before her somewhat sheepishly. "Startling to be so quickly liberated, just when I had made up my mind to indefinite stay," he explained. "Did you—did you——"

"You mean," she said slowly, "how did the door come to be closed over you?"

"Yes. I thought at first it was Reuel. He hasn't——"

"Yes," she replied quickly. "He bobbed up and frightened me into letting the door fall."

"But to—but what became of him?"

"Well—you see you were making a terrific noise. I told him the hinges were weak and he'd better go away, because you had a revolver."

Matt looked at her in silence. He felt acutely embarrassed for some reason how he did not believe a word she said. Her replies were altogether unconvincing.

"Very well," he answered somewhat sternly. "When a woman like you conceals the truth, she does it for some mighty good reason; so——"

She turned upon him in a flash, her hands clenched tightly, her eyes flashing in the moonlight.

"I—I beg your pardon," he stammered. "I didn't intend to be intimate—what I meant to say was——"

"How dare you doubt my word?" she insisted vehemently. "I have told you nothing but the truth."

"Then, of course, I believe you," he responded simply.

Then, before their astonished eyes, a gaunt figure in loose flapping attire rose slowly from the dugout entrance.

The apparition surveyed them in silence, while they gazed back in fascinated horror. Finally it remarked coolly:

"Hope there's no objection to my coming out, too."

"Reuel!" exclaimed the other man, almost unable to believe his eyes. Then his senses had told him straight of that other presence in the dark.

"Yes, it's me," remarked the other, sneeringly. "But you needn't pull the gun. If I'd been going to hurt you, I could have done it down there."

"What were you doing?" demanded Bellamy, sternly.

"Making myself at home," was the response. "You're tongued up some different than when you landed, I see. You and me were equals when we came, but it's been the same old story: You come out on top, wearing good clothes, while I'm driven off with a gun. But remember——"

His voice was filled with a sudden passionate menace which caused Ruth involuntarily to shrink toward her companion.

"Remember," Reuel emphasized with a shake of the fist, "my day is coming, you hear that? Some day I'm going to have the satisfaction of being up while you're down. And it's going to be sooner than you think."

Matt took a step forward, his fingers grasping the cold barrel of the revolver. But the other turned slowly and glided away in the bushes. Matt started to follow, then turned toward Mrs. Leavering.

They gazed at each other in an odd, embarrassed manner. In her look was mingled defiance and vanquishment, but she met his gaze without flinching.

There was no need for words. She had lied to him, and they had both felt it. Yet he liked her the better because she made no effort to explain or excuse herself. She slowly returned to the veranda he sought night after night. Her cheeks were covered with tears—and somehow, he felt responsible.

Still neither had passed between them when they parted at the cottage door, she to go inside and Matt to seat himself disconsolately on the veranda step.

Why could she not trust him? What was the black secret that hung over her young life like a pall, which had converted her in one brief day from a rather bored and listless young woman to an embodiment of terror and apprehension? Was his presence in any way responsible?

In the midst of his reflections came a step in the doorway. A moment later her hand was laid softly on his shoulder.

"I understand," she said, in a voice plaintive but well controlled. "It is natural—perfectly natural—for you to feel as I ought to tell you; but I cannot; I dare not. Please trust me."

"I'll do my best," he assured her, *restraining a desire to cover her hand, as it rested on his shoulder, with his own. "I'd like to help you, but if you can't explain I'll try not to ask any more questions."*

"The wrong was in my trying to deceive you," she continued gently. "I should have told you that I couldn't give the true explanation."

"Tell me this," he responded abruptly: "Will it make it any easier for you if I go away? If I am here to protect you unprotected, but neither do I want to complicate matters for you with my presence. Which is it to be, stay or go?"

She considered. "It would have been easier for me—I am being perfectly frank, you see—if you had never come to the cottage. But since I have come—"she spoke slowly as if carefully considering her words—"it seems best that you should stay here at the cottage."

"Yes," she replied in a constrained tone.

Matt climbed between the sheets of the still absent Leavering's cot, a few minutes later, to lie awake for more than an hour. But since he had been upheld by Mrs. Leavering's conduct, of the menace in his half-brother's words, and—most welcome relation of all—of Ruth Leavering herself.

CHAPTER VII.
THE HERITAGE OF HATE.

REUEL VOGT was afflicted by nature with a countenance that at the first glance suggested the forecastle and the water-front dive. Seen in the worst moments it had a lowering, half-sneering look. Augmented as it was that night by the recent misfortunes, tattered clothing, and the crop of coarse, red hair, covering jowl and cranium alike, the effect was indescribably sinister.

This was the picture that remained in Matt Bellamy's mind the morning following the encounter. He would have been uneasy on his own account; but the thought of Ruth Leavering increased this uneasiness a hundred fold.

The father of the two men, Corruthers Bellamy, had been an aimless wanderer on the earth until a chance meeting with the belle of a small Colorado mining camp resulted in a check to his happy-go-lucky existence. Inside of a few months he had opened up a promising gold claim, acquired a block of town property, and married the woman of his choice.

His prosperity was of short duration. In a short time the promising claim gave out, the town property became a drug on the market, and Corruthers Bellamy commenced to grow restless. Three months before young Matt saw the light the mother-to-be sustained a great shock. Her husband was drowned, apparently, as he was whipping the mountain stream for trout. His rod and some of his clothing were found on the bank; no trace of his body could be discovered.

The widow was not left entirely destitute; in fact, she soon became anything except destitute, for the camp underwent one of those reversals of fortune that give mining the fascination of gambling. New veins of unexpected richness were discovered at a deep level, and the half-developed claim left as a legacy to the widow was among those that assumed great value.

Three years later came a second shock. Corruthers Bellamy returned. His story was so unusual that few believed it, and his wife, in the light of developments, it is likely that he spoke the truth.

He claimed to have lost all recollection of the events following his plunge in the stream, until he came to himself three years later in Seattle. He was entirely at a loss to account for his presence there and had no memory of the gap in his existence.

The theory was accepted by medical men was that he had received a blow on the head when he fell in the river, which had obliterated his memory. Bellamy, it seemed incapable of comprehending the developments he found, including the 3-year-old son.

Then another factor in the situation appeared—a flashily dressed woman with a baby in arms, who had traced the wanderer from Seattle and claimed him as her husband. Regarded as an impostor at first, she soon produced evidence that Bellamy had married her under the name of Matthew Vogt.

Bellamy had taken advantage of escape from his predicament that was characterized by cowardliness. His action left two claimants to his property, which had grown to considerable value. The prior marriage was easily recognized by law, but the other woman was persistent in advancing her claims. A settlement was finally made with Vogt, who left her, but the feud worried Mrs. Bellamy into a premature grave. Both mother and wife their sons were in the early teens.

Matt was left heir to a fair-sized fortune and that had gained rather than lost by being passed on to the second generation. Reuel Vogt had double reason for hating his half-brother: First, he had been bequeathed a legacy by their mutual father; second, Matt was prosperous, while he was cast entirely upon his own resources. His own reckless spendthrift methods had dissipated the amount she had been awarded in the settlement, long before.

On his part, Matt entertained sentiments toward Reuel Vogt little less intense. They were ultimately closely associated with the cause of his mother's death to be regarded in an amicable light.

Something of this situation was suggested by Matt to his hostess on the morning following the arrival of the latter. He did not tell her all; for a strange freak had come to him to remain in her eyes a man misunderstood, and he consistently assumed that to be his station in life from the first.

Ruth Leavering had altered much in the few hours since he had discovered her on the island. The listless expression had vanished completely, to be supplanted by a strained, anxious look. At times Bellamy wondered if she worried more concerning the absence of her husband than she would admit. Either this, or else thoughts of him had been almost entirely driven from her mind by some grave fear.

Shortly after breakfast he stepped out onto the veranda where she was sitting, and after stretching his arms, stepped lazily to the ground. Her eyes followed him intently.

"I am going to take a little walk," he explained, in answer to her unspoken inquiry. "We may be in for a considerable residence on the island; I think I'll try to get better acquainted with it. Yesterday I went up thru the canter until I came to the base of the cliffs. They seem very tall and wild—almost mountainous on the northern slope."

"Mr. Bellamy," she interrupted, with a suggestion of imperiousness, "I wish you would keep away from that side."

He gazed at her blankly.

"The hills are extremely dangerous," she added, "and absolutely honeycombed with caverns. Besides, there are quicksand beds along the edges."

"Oh, I'll be able to take care of myself."

"Have you no concern for me?" she demanded.

"I hadn't thought of that," said Bellamy, instantly abandoning the expedition. "Since you put it in such a light, I certainly cannot think of going against your wishes."

"Thank you. And I hope you won't think me any more selfish than you can help. To tell the truth, I am worried a little. Horace has been gone two days—no, it is three—and it does seem——"

Her voice broke off thoughtfully, while Matt squirmed under the lash of the thought that he would soon be forced to break the news. Still he shrank from the ordeal, postponing it from hour to hour, and finding it increasingly difficult to face with each postponement. He felt that this was the time to prepare her in some way for the tidings. He swallowed hard, opened his lips, and finally blurted forth, instead:

"Then—then the man who was to rescue you, Mrs. Leavering: Suppose he failed, has there been any provision made for——"

"So far as I know," she answered, "only Mr. Froelich and his captain knew the location of this island when we landed."

"But surely—supposing Mr. Froelich should die suddenly, he would be instructed to carry out the rescue."

"Before sailing," she answered quietly, "Mr. Froelich gave the captain the latitude and longitude of the island and left the information with my lawyers, under seal. I do not return within seven months, they are to open the envelope and send for us."

"Oh," said Bellamy with relief. "Then it'll be merely a matter of waiting."

Meeting his eyes seriously, she continued: "My precaution may not prove to be needful. Since leaving port I have learned that the directions Mr. Froelich gave me were false."

"But——"

"I have no doubt," she went on evenly, "that they will organize an expedition; but they will search for yourself in vain. I am afraid there is a very slim chance of their ever finding us."

"What about the captain?" demanded Matt.

"I have reasons for not expecting any assistance from him," she replied.

"You are absolutely certain, then, that there is no chance of rescue—in case something happened to this man Froelich?"

"If I could be certain," she answered regretfully, "my position would be a great deal easier. I am afraid there is a chance that the expedition will stumble on me by mere accident—but I fear they will give up the search."

Matt stared at her, almost dumb with surprise. This was the girl who only a short time before had insisted that the minutes until she should be released from the island. Now, despite an added anxiety for her safety, she appeared even desirous of remaining.

"Afraid!" he stammered. "Did you say you were afraid—afraid we would be discovered?"

She bit her lip. "Certainly not. Of course I want to be rescued—that is—but I am not impatient."

"I believe," smiled Bellamy, "you are becoming attached to the island after all."

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "I loathe it!"

Then, as if angry at the manner in which she had involved herself, she turned abruptly and left Matt with the bewilderment at the door thru which she had disappeared.

"Well," he finally exclaimed, "I evidently need a grounding in feminine psychology? She hates the island, yet she hopes the rescue expedition won't succeed. Now, what——"

He left the sentence uncompleted. The amusement faded out of his countenance as he stared thoughtfully at the cliffs at the north extremity of the island.

CHAPTER VIII.
PECULIAR TREATMENT.

WHEN Ruth once again stepped forth, Matt was paining to observe traces of tears in her eyes, and he mentally abused himself, altho he could think of nothing to say that would relieve her. Almost any remark he made might press the hidden springs touching on the secret sorrow that was preying on her mind.

She began abruptly: "You must think me terribly selfish for keeping you so close to the cottage."

It was in answer to her manner, not her words, that he replied slowly: "So now you wish me to go away so that you can be alone?"

She flushed deeply. "You have no right to so construe what I say. I merely wanted you to feel—to understand

that I have no wish to curb your movements."

"Then I am free to explore the mountainous side?"

She stood reflectively, biting her lips in the extreme of nervousness. Pity for her evident distress almost caused him to relent; but he awaited her reply with apparent unconcern.

"Mr. Bellamy," she suddenly appealed, "I—I wish you would confine your explorations to the southern part of the island. I have no right—I merely ask you to consider my wishes. Will you?"

He did not smile at her inconsistency. He was becoming altogether too provoked for amusement. Why the necessity for all this subterfuge? She had a right to her secrets, and if she had made the request on that ground, he would have felt in duty bound to respect it. As it was, he could not regard her attitude except in the light of a challenge.

"I am at liberty, then, to ramble around the lower end of the island for the balance of the day?"

"Yes," she replied eagerly.

Without a word Matt started off on his jaunt.

Two things he had established with certainty. She wanted to get him out of the way, and she did not want him to visit the north end of the island—for which for some reason fathomless with a sort of reckless anger.

After ten minutes of plunging thru the jungle, he brought himself up sharply and delivered a rather forced laugh at his own expense. Why should he allow himself to be upset over an attempt to conceal something from him that was doubtless none of his business?

The fact was that he resented her lack of confidence in him. His interest, his sympathies, as well as his unconscious longings, were all so deeply concerned with his chance companion on the island that it would have been useless for him to bother his head over the look of horror and dejection that had come into her eyes within the last few hours. Her evident apprehension, he indicated that she was struggling with a situation entirely too big for her. It was evident that she needed support and aid, whether or not she acknowledged the need.

Arriving at this conclusion, Matt abruptly abandoned his ramble and set his steps toward the cottage. He had been gone less than half an hour, but there was no sign of Ruth Leavering.

On the table of the living-room he found a note addressed all to himself:

"I have been growing uneasy about my husband and am going in search of him. Will be back before evening. Please do not attempt to follow.

R. L.

He must have returned a very few moments after her departure. The note left him vexed and uneasy, and he had no intention of obeying her last injunction. Rather only to fill his pockets with rations and to take with him the useless revolver, he set out in the hope of catching up with her.

With some hesitation, he turned his steps toward the shore on which he had made his grewsome discovery. She might be familiar with Leavering's favorite haunts and would search there first. But the he sought diligently on the beach for footprints, there was no evidence that she had visited the spot.

From the shore he struck inland, beating back and forth thru the tropical undergrowth, keeping his ears and eyes hopefully alert and frequently calling her name.

It was late in the afternoon when, thoroly worn out and disheartened, he turned toward the cottage. But there was no sign of her. Leaving that he arrived, shortly after sunset, and the premonition of disaster that had been growing for hours became a heartrending fear.

CHAPTER IX.
AN ALL-NIGHT SEARCH.

EMOTIONS travel faster and seize and harry their victims more swiftly in isolated places. Matt, who had been on the island only a short time, almost his entire thought had been centered about Ruth Leavering, and his terror at the thought of her danger was a revelation of the strong appeal she had already made to his heart.

Remaining only long enough to assure himself that she had not returned in his absence, Matt set forta once more, knowing well the futility of search in the dark, but gaining consolation from activity.

He now saw matters in a new light. His search of the afternoon had been energy misdirected, starting toward the west shore he had obeyed impulse rather than reason.

"Why was he so sudden anxiety about her husband?" Bellamy mused. "Certainly she hasn't displayed even a proper amount of consideration for him. It ought to have been perfectly evident to me that she had this expedition all planned out in advance.

"Also," he continued, "I am a chump for thinking that she would be unlikely to visit the northern part. Her object was to throw me off the scent. There is something there that she is anxious to conceal and it is the logical place to look for her."

A bright moon assisted him in making his way toward the forbidden cliffs; but the distance was greater than he had the moon had set by the time he arrived among the bowlders strewn at the foot of the precipitous walls.

An almost superstitious dread assailed him as he paused before the portals of a yawning cave. Ruth Leavering herself had brought him. The hilliocks forming the crest of the island were neither extremely high nor rugged when compared with continental mountain ranges; but they possessed a rugged grandeur intensified by the darkness.

The vastness of the undertaking on which he was bent almost appalled the searcher. Only a fraction of the extent of the rocky heights. Ruth Leavering's failure to return on schedule time was actually explained by the fact that he was actually the scene of her expedition.

The realization that she might be lost amid the awe-inspiring heaps that blocked his way appalled his individuation. He proceeded forward cautiously, with ears alert for cries of fear or moans of pain. Even the sound he most feared to hear, for it was difficult to proceed without slipping and stumbling. Before long he was covered with bruises and scratches.

Calling out occasionally to attract her attention, if she happened to be within range, he finally gained a comparatively level summit. From it the sound of breakers came louder, the wind bore to his nostrils whiffs of air strong with the scent of the sea. He concluded that he was near the upper shore.

Leading from this point, he found a narrow declivity, which he decided to follow. Where it led he had not the slightest idea, for his eyes could penetrate the gloom scarcely a dozen feet ahead; but he was, chiefly because he knew nothing better to do than to proceed in a general way toward the shore. Chance alone could guide his search.

Without the least warning, he stepped off into space. Clutching violently at the air, he slipped over the edge of a steep bankment, caught his footing for a moment, grasped a round, projecting knob which proved to be a large shrub, and felt himself plunging with increasing momentum down a steep, smooth opening in the rock—a veritable chute-the-chute. In the instant or so when he was falling Ruth Leavering's words recurred to him. The cave was honeycombed with caves. Had he fallen into a labyrinth from which there was no escape?

It seemed a full minute that he fell, clutching frantically at the smooth rock for something to stay his plunge; but it was probably only a few seconds later when he struck bottom. A layer of soft, moist sand had cheated his fall. He was gazing up at the moon and stars, and the roar of surf assailed his ears. The slide had been not the entrance to a cavern, but a natural gateway to the beach.

With unbounded relief, Matt picked himself up and peered around. The beach on which he stood was included in the curve of a great natural amphitheater. The cliffs curved around and out to sea in a wide semicircle, perhaps a quarter of a mile across at the water's edge. There appeared a narrow passageway at one end of the semicircle, which he hoped might prove a connecting link with the main portion of the beach.

As he approached, it seemed to him that he detected a vague shifting of the shadows among the rocks directly in his path. His heart stopped; then he controlled himself and called:

"Mrs. Leavering—are you here?"

Altho the call had been low pitched, the rocks took it up and repeated it with a hundred voices, clear and distinct above the roar of the surf. The echo contributed to his unreasoning dread. He started forward again, only to observe the same uncanny, shadowy movement among the rocks.

He turned impulsively and ran toward the opposite horn of the sea wall. He found a fairly accessible ridge leading toward the rocky crest, and that attained, he commenced to make his way inland.

And somehow, the farther he drew away from the amphitheater the more he regretted his impulsive act, and the more persistent became the notion that there had been something alive hiding on that rock-strewn shore.

CHAPTER X.
THE USURPER.

THE sun glared down on the little island with the direct and burning intensity of noon in the tropics, as a ragged, mud-bespattered figure lurched unsteadily thru the verdure toward the cottage by the spring. Matt Bellamy was returning from his fruitless search, too exhausted even for regret.

He approached the cottage from the rear, stumbling toward it as if each worn and battered shoe weighed a ton. He could not have told at any moment merely by dropping to the ground, but a definite purpose urged him forward. Sleep and food, he knew, until he learned whether by some lucky chance Ruth Leavering had returned during his search.

As he reached the near vicinity of the house he raised his head alertly; involuntarily his steps quickened. The rhythmic twanging of a musical instrument reached his ears.

The quest was the end of his search! After spending twenty-four hours in a nightmare endeavor to rescue the girl from some unknown peril, she had come home to find her strumming a guitar!

The next instant he revised his assumption. Not the girl, but a man! He had heard; but now, above the chords, there rose a voice, deep, tender, melodious, a rich voice.

Forgetful of his weariness, Bellamy ran forward, making a detour that brought him in a position to view the front of the cottage from the screen furnished by thickly growing trees.

A thousand surmises rushed thru his head. Evidently there was a third man on the island. Various circumstances corroborated the supposition. There had been the cigarette incident, for one. Altho Ruth had seemingly explained the presence of a half-smoked remnant by professing a fondness for the weed, he now began to regard this as a clever ruse. He had rejected from the first the explanation she gave for her strange agitation on the second day after his arrival. And her unexplained imprisonment of himself in the cellar pointed, also, in a way, to a fourth inhabitant.

But the memories of memories followed a suggestion—perhaps more rational and commonplace—but which gave him a sudden advantage from which he was genuinely ashamed. Perhaps he had been wrong in his surmise as to the identity of the guitar player. Perhaps Ruth's husband might have returned, after all.

Parting the foliage, he obtained a glimpse of the living-room. Facing front, Ruth, in a white sailor costume, was arranging the table for luncheon. The man, in white, tight-fitting trousers and negligently in a porch chair, strumming the guitar indifferently but with some thinking of for his lack of skill by his glorious voice.

Matt stared long and intently. Then he slowly allowed the shrubs to spring back into place. His hands dropped nervelessly against his sides.

The next moment he stepped forward from his concealment, tightly gripping the revolver in his pocket. He strode toward the cottage, his lips tightly compressed and his eyes fixed upon the composed, red-tipped countenance of the man on the veranda.

How, in the name of all the saints, had his place been usurped by Raoul Vogt?

The singing came to an abrupt stop. With the steadiness of a rock, no less intense than the aggressor's, and full of insolent inquiry, Vogt awaited the coming of the man whose place he had changed positions in the night.

His big-boned figure fitted moderately well into the cottage, but appropriately enough, Horace Leavering's well-stocked wardrobe. The tufted red hair on his hands and that which hair on his head gave him a shaggy appearance.

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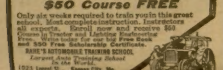

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pearance; but the stubble had been removed from his lank jaw, which improvement, so far as it went, was a relief to the eye.

Ruth paused in her preparations, and stood gazing at the two men, her eyes wavering from one to the other.

Bellamy did not look at her. He saw nothing save the sinister face of his half-brother. He came to a stop a few feet before the veranda.

"What do you choose to make of it?" countered Reuel indifferently.

"Only the other day," said Bellamy, "you came here like a thief, and forced this woman to give to himself by driving you away with a revolver. Later in the same day you showed your gratitude for her charity by stealing into her larder, undoubtedly for the purpose of plundering it. And you wound up by threatening us!"

"Only the other day," countered Vogt, mockingly, "I said our positions would soon be reversed. It seems to have fulfilled that part of my bargain. As for the charity—that is just what it was, and I don't accept charity from anybody."

"That is true," hastily interposed Ruth Leavering. "His purpose in the larder was to put back the things I had given him earlier in the day."

Bellamy's eyes veered to the girl. Why should she rise to the defense of the reprobate?

"Very well," he responded. "You refuse to accept charity; but you force your company onto a defenseless woman by taking advantage of my absence. Well, that doesn't go. Understand!"

"What do you mean?"

"This ranch isn't big enough to hold you and me, and wouldn't be if it was twice the size. And I happen to hold the balance of power."

"You do?"

The girl suddenly interposed herself between the belligerents.

"Don't! Don't!" she exclaimed appealingly. "Have you no consideration for me?"

Subdued by her entreaty, but still angry to the core of his being, Matt addressed her as gently as his agitation would permit.

"Of course I am considering you. That is what impels me to throw this intruder on your hospitality out into the belongs."

Reuel laughed unpleasantly. "I should think," he observed, "a lady like herself ought to have the right to choose her guests. If she says go, that settles it with me."

"Certainly not," she replied quickly, her voice breathless with apprehension. "I—I want Mr. Vogt to remain."

It was altogether too obvious that she spoke under stress of apprehension.

"He has done nothing to offend you," asserted Matt. "You wouldn't say that of your own free will. Therefore, I'm going to insist."

"No, no!" she cried in alarm. "Mr. Bellamy, you don't understand. You don't understand. We are all equal on the island and all should fare alike. Please put up your revolver—and try to see things from my viewpoint."

Mechanically Matt did as she wished. Did she actually wish this man to remain? Very well; he could only acquiesce—and keep his eyes open.

His weapon disappeared itself. Bewildered and baffled, he turned to enter the cottage.

"Just a minute!"

At Reuel's domineering tone he turned slowly.

"You were going inside? Very well; I forbid it."

Bellamy's anger flared again. "You—you——"

"Mrs. Leavering," said Vogt, "I don't think this man a fit character to enter the house. Do you understand?"

Matt glanced at her. "You don't mean —you don't mean——"

Slowly he recoiled a step and stood gazing at her with surprise and misery written in his eyes. She stood with arms outstretched as if in entreaty, and her lips were framing one word over and over.

"Stay! stay! stay!"

"I think you will," Reuel was repeating comfortably. "The reason I see reflected in your face is better than any argument I can urge."

Ruth hastily withdrew, while Matt sank dispiritedly down on the edge of the veranda.

Lowering his voice, Reuel added: "You have had a little demonstration of my power. Already, you see, I have a stronger hold than you on the lady."

Matt sat immovable, not condescending to reply. He would stay—yes. He would stay with the one object of finding a key to the black mystery that hung over the island, embittering its sunshine and reaching the heart of Bellamy himself thru his yearning for the queen of the domain.

He had a sensation of being helpless to assist or protect, of witnessing her agonized struggles as she became entangled deeper and deeper in the meshes of an invisible net.

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* * *

Domestic Diplomacy.

Mrs. John Brown, a friend of Henriette's, says that when she married, John allowed her to select everything for the new home with the exception of the kitchen stove.

"A man knows better how to select that than a woman," said he. Manlike, he bought the biggest stove and the highest-priced one on the market.

The wife was very proud of the stove, but did have spells of wishing that the kitchen were larger or the stove smaller, so that each would not be so conscious of the other's presence.

The first few years they moved about considerably, as is the way with newly married folk, and the stove was always the stove. Finally wife coaxed round a bit and suggested that they sell it and get a smaller one, and hubby acquiesced.

In a week or two, wife had found a purchaser in a woman who lived in the second-story apartment next door. When the wagon came to take the stove away, they had an awful time to get it out of the kitchen, and wife breathed a big sigh of relief when she saw it well out of the yard and on the way up the stairs of the next door apartment. A few minutes later she looked out, and to her horror they were bringing it back down the stairs. "What's the matter?" she called.

"We can't get it in the door," said the man, "it will have to be taken up thru the window."

Wife decided not to show herself again until the stove was well inside the apartment. The next time she peeped out, they were operating a pulley device, by which the stove went round and the stove went up; it was already five feet in the air.

"Good!" thought Mrs. Brown. In a minute or two she again peeped out, and they were using the pulley device, but the horse was going up and the stove down. "No for quick action," said Mrs. Brown to herself, and hastily throwing a few clothes into a suitcase, she made for the home of her mother, where she and John remained for several days.

What the woman in the next apartment said to Mrs. Brown when she got back home would make another interesting story, but Mrs. Brown only wiped the tears away with her apron, and said that it was just nearly breaking her heart to do without that stove; that there never was an oven that could bake such good pie, cake, etc.

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The $500 Suicide

By Augustin Wilber Breeden

ALBERT SMITH or Al Mannering, as the name appeared on the manuscripts of a dozen or more prospective popular song hits, was desperate. Miss Madie Sullivan, belle of Hopville-on-the-Stub, the girl for whom Al had given up his street carnival career and come to New York to pursue fame and royalty checks, was, according to common report, about to be married to Ches Douglas, the Apollo of Hopville. The news had reached poor Al simultaneously with the return of a bunch of manuscripts, and the loss of his meal ticket and hall bedroom. Since then he had neither eaten nor slept. How could he?

If he could only escape from the city and get back to Hopville, he felt he could reconquer the fickle heart of Madie and whip Ches Douglas; then he would have the courage to begin life anew. But the village of his dreams was a whole freight division from the city and the winter wind was keen. On the other hand, the river was close by. The river! Why not? Suddenly Al began to hum a brand-new song, composed as he walked: "The River Is My Last and Only Friend." The tune struck him as especially pretty and pathetic, and he took out an old envelope and wrote out the words and air upon it. "When I have crooked," he said to himself, tragically, "they'll find this on me."

As he hurried, shivering, toward the Brooklyn Bridge he was struck with a whimsical idea: What if his sudden tragic end should arouse interest in his work and bring him a belated fortune? There was his song, "Old Missouri," and that other, "Dearest Madie," that he had banked on so heavily, one in the hands of a big publisher and the other with a Broadway star, besides various others scattered about with this publisher and that. But no, if was the watery grave and ten lines in a journalistic potter's field for his.

As he reached the center of the bridge and turned to take a last look at the city's lights gleaming thru the frosty air, he felt a hand laid lightly on his shoulder.

"Would you mind letting me pay you a little something for doing it?" asked a voice.

"For doing what?" demanded Al, wheeling suddenly round to confront a dapper little man with a bright, winning face and a chummy smile.

"Why, committing suicide," replied the little man. "I noticed you were fixing to pass in your cellucloids—take a high dive, in other words. Now, if you don't mind taking an envelope of papers with you to that mysterious bourne, I'm willing to pay your heirs and assigns a trifling sum, say $500 for the service."

This sounded like a good proposition to Al. At any rate, disposed to make delays, now that the chilly breath of East River had begun to cool his original ardor.

"But what makes you think I was about to jump in?" he asked, with a nervous laugh.

"Oh, I've been gum-shoeing about after you for the last two days," replied the other, confidentially. "Discovered you at the General Delivery window night before last—must 'a' been a solar plexus blow you got to make you lose envelopes, eh? You're a lucky find for me, all the same. But I suppose you'll crawfish, now that I'm making you a present of the earth while; that's the way with you down-and-out fellows."

"Is it?" asked Al, suavely. "Show me the mazuma an' see!"

His melancholy had suddenly slipped from him. He felt a queer little turn on the bridge and began to hum:

"Oh the river it will hoish me as a mother stills her babe,
The river it will keep me till the sleep—
Tee deedle um dee-dee, ump tee deedle um dee-dee!

For the river is me loist an' only friend!"

"She's your friend right enough if she earns you that five hundred, eh, Old Timer?" the interloper was prompter. "Come on now and let me call a taxi, and we'll have all the preliminaries arranged in no time. By the way, Smith's my name, and the fellow that requires your services is a young sprout named Fairchild."

He hailed a taxicab, and the two sped away to one of the most fashionable quarters of the metropolis. Mounting the steps of a modern marble palace, they took an elevator, passed along a richly carpeted hallway, and entered a man's den.

"No, Fairchild, here's the chap I 'phoned you about!" said the little man toward the bathroom. "He has kindly agreed to commit suicide for you."

"All right; be with you out in a minute!" came a voice from within.

"Some millionaire double o' mine tryin' to escape the stinging," Al was thinking as they waited. "I'd like to know what there is in those papers I am to souse for them. Well, I'll play it for keeps. I'll go on playin' the game till I can quit it a few points to the good."

But a moment later Al saw that here was no double of his. The man emerging from the bathroom was as delicate as a girl, while Al was the picture of athlete. This other person had the complexion of rare old china, eyes like Alpine violets, and the perfect cyclone of black hair.

"Oh, better is anonymity with fame," chanted this vision, "than mere obscurity, tho with a name. I have just finished 'The Mystic Moonlight on the Wandering Wadi.'"

"Bughouse," thought Al, "an' so young an' pretty, too. It's really too bad!"

"Have you got the documents ready?" asked the manager of the affair. For reply the other handed him two bulging envelopes.

"Be—aw—rather careful with them," he said. Then he broke forth again: "Mad Madrigals of Love—Wee Rivulets—Dreamstreams Cease to Flow—front page, decorations by Van Dusenbaum!"

"Top floor all to 1st," mused Mannering; but a moment later he changed his opinion.

"I wouldn't like any—aw—unpleasant accidents, y' know, Mr. Hoakum," Fairchild was saying. "Still he'll have to fake the main act pretty strong; the

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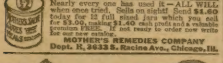

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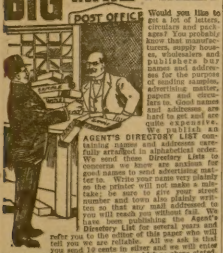

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price of cubs, cops, and corpses has gone up a good deal recently."

"Bums or not, even money other way," said Al to himself at this last remark. Yet he felt somehow that here was a deep fellow and a bully good one, however much madness there might be in his methods, which were certainly queer enough looking on the surface. Al had been a high-diver in his street carnival days; and he believed he could take a drowning as skilfully as the next. But why did these two strange fellows wish it of him? Who could possibly profit by his jumping into the river and wetting a few papers? Well, he would switch the papers before he jumped in; he had made up his mind to that. He would carry some of his own manuscripts instead of these other suspicious documents. They would not smirch his memory if he stayed in the river, and would be less liable to lead to Sing Sing if he came out of it.

Al was still cogitating these things as Mr. Hoakum led him to the waiting taxi and they sped away, bringing up at Coley's Cafe. Coley's is one of those quiet little eating-places where Love takes the heroine in the best seller. Here Hoakum ordered supper, and the two men ate and drank with Mannering chatting and killing time as only two men about town can. But at the stroke of twelve Mr. Hoakum became suddenly all business.

"Here," said he, "are the papers that must be found upon you when you are picked up."

At took the papers, made a show of clearing his pockets of his own private documents in order to make room for them, switched the two sets of envelopes with the skill of the accomplished he had formerly been, and asked a waiter if he would be so kind as to chuck the discarded set into the nearest can for him. "Some old love letters and rejected song poems," he explained to Mr. Hoakum, who had not in the least suspected the sleight of hand.

"The five hundred," said the promoter, "to whom shall I pay it?"

"To yours truly," responded Al. "You may just register it at the office for to-night with me standing looking." He added gayly, "The sea-streams will cease to flow on Sing Sing evening that if I don't spend that fiver on a wedding in Hopville-on-the-Stub!"

"Shucks, my lad!" said the dapper little promoter. He looked straight into Al's eyes and gave him the merest ghost of a wink. "You used to do a tank-and-ladder act; isn't that right? Good enough! Pull me off a good job of drowning and I'll double the bonus."

A half-hour later on the bridge, he bade Al good-by with: "Dead till I give you the cue; and turned his back in order not to see him take the leap.

The next moment Al was under the waves of East River. The water was extremely cold—he had never supposed that water could be so cold—but he was determined to make an artistic job of it. He stayed under almost too long; struggled with some of the under currents, and began to wonder vaguely how soon a rescuing party would arrive. Then he found himself losing all sense of his surroundings.

Al came to himself—after a lapse of, he knew not how long—with a bugging in his ears, a pain in his head, and a terrible gnawing in the pit of his stomach. His first thought was of that registered letter mailed to his address, and the second of the game he was playing. He was dimly conscious that he was lying in a smelly riverside undertaker's shop, and that there were several persons about him. He could hear the deep bass of a patrolman's voice and the steady scratch-scratch of a reporter's pencil. This was all at first; then several voices.

"So this," said some one, evidently a reporter, "was found on the person—Ump-tump, tiddle ee-dee! Say, that's good."

"Well, I be dumbed!" interjected by the voice of Hoakum.

"Look here," again from the cub. "Look at this: 'The River is My Last and Only Friend,' words and music complete on the back of this old envelope. Well, it looks like the poor devil was telling the truth, eh?"

"Sure the river flirts wi' all of 'em, when the drink's out an' the thirst an' hunger is gnawin' at their vitals," said the deep bass voice.

"Well, I be dumbed!" reiterated the promoter; then after a moment he added, "Well, I be dumbed!"

"Look here's another one—a daisy!" came the voice of a second cub. "'Lend a Five'—listen to this:

"'When a fellow's out and down,
And he's wandering over town,
And he's wondering on the earth
to keep alive,
Oh, think of charity
And its awful rarity,
And do not lend a hand, but lend a
five.'

"Look a-here, and here, and here! By George, Bill, that fellow was a regular music store. There's some good stuff, too. Say, I'm going to publish a facsimile of this River piece, whole page, with 'Mr. Fairchild's your piano' and the like. Suppose you take some of this other one and do the same with it. We'll have the whole town whistling those two before tomorrow night."

But Al did not hear the scheme for making a fortune. There was a dim, faintness swept over him; his head swelled to the size of a balloon and then suddenly collapsed, and he was again unconscious.

When he awoke the second time he seemed to be in the bedroom of a suite of a downtown club, warm and scented with the odor of good cigars and still better stuff, and was dimly conscious that he became conscious of; the second was that some one outside the window was whistling a song that he was strangely familiar to him. What was it? Where had he heard it? Ah, he knew now: it was "Drop Me Off at Harlem" or "Bring Friend." Was he dreaming or was he famous? While he tried to collect his senses and think, he became conscious, another man passed whistling the same tune, and then a newsboy, humming same. "Well, I be dumbed!" holsh me as a mother stills her babe!"

Mannering listened a moment, beginning to lull himself to sleep with the blessed feeling that life was lovely, when he was suddenly aroused by the rippling tones of a phonograph across the street, which began to announce: "'Ole Missouri's Good Enough for Me' Fairchild and Hoakum's latest song by Al Mannering, drowned in East River! Sung by Max Maxwell—Columbia Record:

"In a log camp meetin' down in Ole Missouri,
A preacher he was preachin' very
solemnly,
Says, 'All stand up that wants to go to
heaven,
Then, 'All stand up that wants to
go——'"

Al chuckled to himself in spite of his weakness when he began to estimate his royalties. He was famous—famous! He could hardly believe his ears. He joined in feebly at the end into the chorus and took the home stretch:

"What there is up yonder I can't tell—
I don't want to go to Heaven nor to—
well,
Ole Missouri's good enough for me!"

A moment's interval elapsed—an interval in which Al felt at least six different people whistling one or another of his song tunes—and then the phonograph began to sing: "Dearest Madie, Maid Just Made for Me," and Al began to reckon his royalties in the ten thousands.

How he had been taken from that smelly undertaker's shop and brought here, still supposed to be dead by the general public, was a question that worried Al very little. He felt grateful toward whoever had brought him here. Indeed, he felt grateful toward the entire world, but most of all toward Fairchild and Hoakum. Then he thought of "The Wandering Wadi" and had a flash of inspiration.

"That geek wasn't crazy, after all," he said to himself. "Wy, that envelope o' his's music to 'Down Dat Long Avenue,' same as mine. But pshaw! he couldn't 'a' sold a song about a Wanderin' Waddy; now if it had been 'Wandering Willie' or Wanderin' Ikey, there'd 'a' been some sense an' humor to it. But anyway, I done 'im wrong when I carryin' the junk along wi' mine. I'll jes' give him the five hundred back an' let him in on some o' my royalties."

While Al was musing thus he heard a cry outside:

"Extra! Extra—Al Mannering chucks all his up-to-date portrey in a garbage can at Coley's Cafe before drownin' himself in deeps of East River! 'Mad Trickles of Love' and the 'Hand of Nimity with Fame'! Su-pe-erb collection of high-class portreys!"

Al leaped to his feet with joy: so he hadn't wronged his employer so deeply after all; he could give him all the royalties from his own pieces.

"Ah, there you are! That squares the matter." It was the voice of the dapper little promoter speaking in the next room.

"But oh, Lord!" came the wailing tones of Fairchild, "to think of my poems being published along with that junk about 'Old Missouri'! And just listen how that newsboy's butchering my titties. 'Hand of Nimity'! That's aw—horrible, y know!"

"But, man," cried the other, "this is fame—fame! Can you realize that? And it all proves that my scheme was all right. That drowning act was the goods. Why, it's brought fame enough for you both!"

"Well, I must admit," responded the voice of Fairchild, "that your scheme worked like an, aw—charm. It couldn't have worked better if I had gone into the river meself. Listen to that phonograph over there! It was that facsimile business that did the work!"

Al staggered to the door thru which the two voices came.

"Aw, felicitations, old man!" cried young Fairchild, springing forward with outstretched hand and stopping the shamefaced apologies on Mannering's lips. "Your royalties will make you, aw—more than comfortable. But you'll have to appoint Hoakum here your executor, so that he can make you some good reyalty contracts. You're still dead, y' know. It wouldn't do for you to come to life right away; it might, aw—spoil the sale, y' know."

"Dead as long as you see fit," replied Al. "I'll slip off with my Madie on a wedding tour to Panama. Al Mannering is only my stage name, anyway; so you see they won't be any trouble about gittin' off. And say, Fairchild, old top, jest let Mr. Hoakum here have your share o' the dope published in any shape you like. You'll have one o' these days—it looks editions with a flabby green binding an' plenty o' pictures. An' say, put your name on them, too. Give the public a story about givin' 'em to me when I was down an' out to help me up, an'——"

At that moment Madie Sullivan, belle of Hopville-on-the-Stub, reputed fiancee of Chet Douglas, had burst into the presence.

"Oh, Al," she blubbered, bracing herself against him. "Al, I'm so glad you're still alive! I come as soon as I read the account of your death! But, Al, how on earth could you believe these lies about me goin' to marry that spoopindike of a Ches Douglas?"

* * *

An Experienced Man.

"You say that you want some name engraved on this ring," said the jeweler to the bashful young man.

"Yes, I want the words, 'George, to his dearest Alice' engraved on the inside of the ring."

"Is the young lady your sister?"

"No, she is the young lady to whom I am engaged."

"Well, then, were you I would not have 'George, to his dearest Alice' engraved on the ring. If Alice changes her mind you can't use the ring again."

"What would you suggest?"

"I would suggest the words, 'George, to his first and only love.' You see, in this that inscription you can use the ring half a dozen times. I have had experience in such matters myself."

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Telltale Footprints.

(Continued From Page 3.)

quite so active when the dope dies in him."

"It's a pitiful case," Doctor Morse nodded. "That boy has his life before him, but he won't last five years if he keeps on as he's doing. The men who make a living selling the nasty stuff ought to be shot."

Sheriff Parker looked absently at his friend for a minute or two.

"I'm going to return to Larabee's right away, Horace," he finally declared. "The more I think of it the more I am convinced that the woman in the case is our strongest card. I may stay the night out there. If anything fresh comes up you'll know where to find me."

It was full dark and very cold when Sheriff Parker drove into the farmhouse yard and called Jase to put up his team. Simeon Flagg and his wife eyed the proceeding a little curiously; but they said nothing, merely returning the briefest of nods to the officer's cheery greeting. As the big negro busied himself with the horses, his employer questioned him closely in the sign language which was the means of communication between the two. Jase seemed to have a good deal to tell, and by the time he had done, and both men entered the house, the sheriff was smiling to himself.

"I have come back," he announced calmly, "to see the young woman you are concealing here. Where is she?"

For a moment the aged couple stared at him in blank consternation; then old Simeon's faded blue eyes dropped uneasily to the floor, while his wife flushed flamingly.

"I told him so!" she exclaimed. "I told 'em both so—that no good would come of this thing, an' I would, I know it, Sheriff Parker. That hussy was a fool not to run when she had the chance. Now she can pay for it. I only hope that you won't think Simeon an' me guilty of no wrongdoin', because we ain't—we've only carried orders."

"I shall be glad to believe that, Mrs. Flagg," the sheriff answered, "and I hope you will no longer try to hinder my investigations. It will pay you to be quite frank with me. Mr. Larabee was kidnaped on his way here last night—you'll be helping him by telling me all you know."

Once again surprise caused Mrs. Flagg's mouth to open and her false teeth to fall into view, while her husband stared at the sheriff incredulously.

"Kidnaped!" she breathed. "kidnaped! D'you hear what he says, Simeon Flagg? The master has been kidnaped. What have those scoundrels stuff Where is he?"

"That is exactly what I am trying to find out myself," the officer smiled. "I was hoping that you might help me."

"I'm afraid we can't do that, sir," Simeon shook his heavy head almost sadly. "We're quiet folk, as you know, an' Mr. Larabee's affairs is none of ourn. We're just here to see after the farm an' we know nothing of his plans, sir. But I'll show you up to the young woman. To tell the truth, I've hardly trusted her ever since the way she took on when she seen that body this mornin', an' I'm not sorry to have the thing looked into."

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KILLS PAIN

He turned and led the way upstairs, stopping finally before a closed door. At first, the girl stubbornly refused to open it, but after a short conversation thru the panels she changed her mind. Sheriff Parker's tone showed very plainly that he did not mean to be trifled with, and old Simeon chuckled inwardly as he discovered that here at last was a man whom his uninvited guest could not terrify. He was very much disappointed, however, when the sheriff stepped inside the room and shut the door in his face without a word of apology, for he had looked forward to witnessing that interview.

The room in which Parker found himself was high-ceiled and spacious, with draperies and dull brass ornaments upon the walls and thick rugs under foot, and a large mirror at one end. Divans and soft cushions were scattered about, and two massive oak pillars divided the room at one side and formed a window-alcove which contained a brass bed. The place where the visitor stood was well lighted, yet the air seemed misty. Cloud-like wreaths of opaque cigarette smoke floated in still layers upon the stagnant air, and a faint, cloying perfume, as of incense, pervaded everything. All in all, the room was a decided surprise in such a house; almost as surprising as was the first appearance of Ida Larabee.

She was reclining on a long divan, smoking a scented cigarette, and eying the intruder with the haughty disdain of a queen looking down from her throne upon a disobedient servant. She was clad in a rich silk kimono, which left her arms and throat bare, a mass of reddish-bronze hair was coiled loosely on the top of her head, and she glared at her visitor thru a pair of lustrous dark eyes which shone under the shaded lights like forest pools. Even in her bizarre costume amid such queer surroundings, there was no denying her beauty.

Blinking almost owlishly behind his glasses, Sheriff Parker looked about him curiously for a moment, before he let his roving gaze settle on the girl. She arose and faced him scornfully, then with a gesture of contempt lay down upon the divan and again began to smoke. After an instant's scrutiny of her, he bowed slightly and pulled up a chair in which he calmly seated himself.

Next week's Ledger will contain the concluding chapters of this interesting story. You will want a great treat if you do not read it to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

* * *

Idle Hands.

"Isn't it awful to see a lot of men lying around idle?" said Mrs. Gillinghurst to her neighbor.

"Lying around idle is not so bad," replied Mrs. Wartenweiler. "But lying around not doing anything. An industrious man out of work is the most pitiable object on earth."

"My brother Bob has been at our house for some time. If he would remain in a restful attitude it would be all right. Things could go around him and he would not like to see him around idle. He has to be doing something every minute.

"Yesterday Mr. Wartenweiler and I started uptown. When we departed we noticed Bob looking at the fence. When we had got about two blocks from the house it came over me that he was planning something, and I got nervous and ran back home. Sure enough, Bob was getting ready to whitewash the fence.

"I didn't want my fence whitewashed. It is more artistic-looking as it is, and, besides, I had geraniums and vines trained all over it, and I wouldn't let him pull them down. I knew that the whitewashing the fence was a job that would last him an entire day. During the period of his idleness an old job is the most destructive thing in the world in his eyes.

"As a compromise I let him whitewash an old henhouse away out in the back yard. It hadn't been used for years, but I thought it would do no harm to let him whitewash it. He did a splendid job on it. When I went out to see it he had remodeled the whole thing and made it into an arbor.

"He is a genius at thinking up things to do. One day there was the most terrible noise and we thought the house was on fire and the engines had come. We rushed out to see what was up, and there was Bob. He had put a long ladder up against the house and had dragged the garden hose up to the roof, where he was busy cleaning out the gutters. He said he was finishing them out good, so that they would work better the next time there was a heavy shower.

"He has put an electric bell under the dining-room table, where I can ring it by putting my foot on it. Has grafted a tree. He sawed, hammered, bound and gagged that tree until he managed to get two whole days' work out of it. He has painted the board walks out in the garden a dark color. He said there was too much glare from them.

"I never know what he will do next and am always uneasy. The man simply must have employment. He has been after me to order coal for a week. He wants to put it away and pile it around in various places in the basement. "If he doesn't find work soon I shall be obliged to let him do the washing and ironing or lay in a supply of cannon balls for him to pile around first at one end of the yard and then the other."

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COURSE OF EVENTS.

Joe' a friendly argument,
When it started,
Into it each person went
Open-hearted.
Joe' is frank as free debate
On the business of the State,
Marked by a politeness great,
When it started.

'Twas a case of pullin' hair
When it finished,
Epithets they flew fur fair,
Undiminished.
Till the atmosphere was pink
An' we all came to think
We were on perdition's brink
When it finished.

Agreed With Him.

A young doctor in a country district was called one night to his first case by an old farmer. The patient was the farmer's son, who was lying on the bed in much pain. The young medico threw out his chest and said:

"Now, don't alarm you no alarm. It is nothing but a corrupted corporal with a tapeamodically emanating from the gastrichfully an inflamed appendix, producing a prolific source of irritability in the peripheral epidermis."

The farmer looked at him and replied: "Just what I said; but his mother thought it was a stomachache."

Refuge.

"What's the latest?"

"How my cat does shows may soon cost $14 a pair."

"Well, that barefoot fad is coming at the right time."

The Owl Wasn't Killed.

A good story is going around about a prominent city man who was visiting friends the other day, and there was an owl in the garden that had got only one leg. My friend used to admire this owl, and two or three days after his arrival he had some cyther (as they call their game) for dinner. The "game" was very small, but he enjoyed his dinner immensely and the next day he missed the owl from the garden.

"Where has the owl gone to?" he inquired of the landlady.

"Monsieur had a little dish of cyther yesterday," was the answer, "and the resemblins of the travelers."

"Why, did you kill the owl for dinner?"

"I no kill so owl, M'sieur; he dies himself."

Love Their Work.

"Why is it that the telephone operators are all women?" Mrs. Thomas asked her husband.

"Well," answered Mr. Thomas, "the management of the telephone exchanges are aware that no class of people work so faithfully as those who are in love with their job; and they know that women always love their work at the switchboard."

"What is the work of a telephone operator?" Mrs. Thomas further inquired.

"Talking," answered Mr. Thomas.

The Voice in the Receiver—"I say, the water from my faucets is that muddy we don't use it."

The Water Office Clerk—"Is it roily?"

The Voice—"Naw, This is Kelly."

A Misconstrued Question.

During a trial in a country village the court stenographer was ordered by the judge to go to a certain house and fetch him a book. He soon arrived, and, out from his work, box, dusty and dirty.

The judge, a very fastidious man, noticed this, and remarked severely: "Look here, my man, what do you mean by coming into court in this state? How long do you wear your whiskers?"

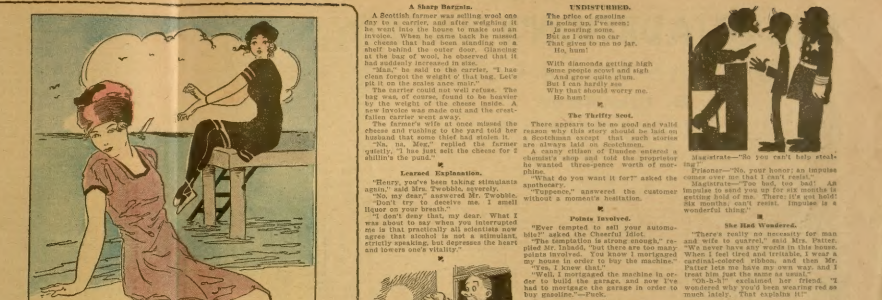
The smith flushed and answered surlily, "Mist about down fer the Kaiser gus'ner. 'Ow long do you wear yours?"

Not Encouraging.

An old couple in the south were much distressed, owing to their increasing poverty, in thinking their son in the North would help them; they wrote, stating their trouble, and saying that if he did not aid them they would be obliged to go to the poorhouse.

A couple of weeks passed, and then came a letter from the son, saying:

"My dear parents: Just wait another week, and I'll come home and go with you. Your affectionate son."



"What does Harry call his host?"

"I can't say exactly, but I'm sure what he called it when he was trying to start the engine wasn't the name painted on the bow?"

A Perfect Womna.

"Who ever saw a perfect man?" asked Tin Angelo at a revival meeting. "There is no such thing. Every man has his faults, plenty of them."

Of course, no one had ever seen a perfect man, and consequently the statement of the revivalist was received with applause. The refrain continued:

"No, sir, I never saw a perfect woman." At this point the minister, who had been nodding, was aroused by the evangelist asked, "that you have seen a perfect woman?"

"Well, I can't just say that I have seen her," the woman replied, "but I have heard a great deal about her; my husband's first wife."

Superior Knowledge.

In these days of good education children learn things their fathers and mothers know very little about.

Nora, aged 9, met her father the other day, with her little blue eyes full of tears.

"Papa, daddy?" she wailed. "I've just fallen and bumped my patella."

Her father looked down at her in a rather sympathetically, as with the best intentions in the world he bent to assume her elbow.

Nora drew herself angrily away.

"Humph!" she snorted, with a superior air. "I said my patella—that's not my elbow. My elbow's my great sesamoid!"

Of Same Mind.

Husband—"You see, I put this down as settled, if I ever get out of it you will never catch me in matrimony again."

Wife—"You needn't worry, dear. I'm perfectly satisfied to be referred to as 'the first.'"

Suspicious.

"I don't like the way she spoke of the baby."

"Why, she said it looked like you."

"Yes, and she said it is such a nasty way."

Enough.

She—"And did you break off the engagement?"

He—"No; brutally, not knew. Just told her what my army pay is."

The Way of It.

At a Caledonian banquet in London a Scotsman who had retired to the metropolis made a speech in which Scotland and all things Scottish were highly and loudly praised that an Englishman who was present at last had finished:

"I doubtless all that you Scotsmen say it true, why don't you stay there instead of coming here?"

"Weel," answered the Scotsman, "Ah'll tell ye the reason. When Ah left Scotland in business in Fife, Ah fand a' the town talkin' about me, mesel', and Ah didna' come awa' the less wi' mest. See Ah'm here because Ah'm proud."

Only Two Bills.

Distinguished Out of Town Guest—(speaking at banquet)—"Your beautiful suite city appeals to me. As we turn on the train I remarked to my wife: 'Ah, my dear; you and I ought to be living on the top of one of these magnificent bills!'"

Toastmaster (in hoarse whisper)—"Go easy; we've got only two bills in town. The insane asylum in on one and the newspaper works on the other."

Poor Outlook.

Casualty (visiting sick friend)—"Well, Mike, at how are ye this mornin'?"

O'Brien—"Poorly, Tim, poorly. Shure I'm that wake ye'll be comin' to me wake before the end of the wake."

UNDISTURBED.

The price of gasoline
Is going up, I've seen;
Is soaring some,
But as I own no car
That gives to me no jar.
Ho, hum!

With diamonds getting high
Some people scowl and sigh.
And grow quite glum.
But I can hardly see
Why that should worry me.
Ho hum!

The Thrifty Scot.

There appears to be no good and valid reason why this story should be laid on a Scotsman except that such stories are always laid on Scotchmen.

A canny citizen of Dundee entered a chemist's shop and told the proprietor he wanted three-pence worth of morphine.

"What do you want it for?" asked the apothecary.

"Evidence," answered the customer without a moment's hesitation.

Points Involved.

"Ever tempted to sell your automobile?" asked the Cheerful Idiot.

"The temptation is strong enough," replied Mr. Dustin Pfeiffer, "but too many points involved. You have I mortgaged a house in order to buy the machine."

"Yes, I know that."

"Well, I mortgaged the machine in order to build the garage, and now I've had to mortgage the garage in order to buy gasoline."—Puck.

"Throwing out his chest."

Devoted Family.

"Tea," said the principal of the young ladies' academy to the new parent, "you ought to be very happy, my dear child, to be the father of so large a family. All the members of which appear to be devoted to one another."

"Devoted, forsooth!" roared the old gentleman, in amazement. "What on earth do you mean, ma'am?"

"Why, yes, indeed," said the principal, bewildered by the outburst. "No fewer than eleven of Reginald's brothers have been here this term to take him out, and we tells me she expects the tall one with the blue eyes again tomorrow."

Needed the Bell.

"Can't you children play without continually ringing the doorbell?" said mother, who had been trying in vain to get an afternoon nap.

"No, mother," said Alice, "it's quite impossible. You see Edith and I are playing house and Freddie is the collector."

Downed, as Usual.

Peck—"Of course, like all women, you have an inordinate curiosity."

Mrs. Peck—"Get a curiosity, have I? I've got a freak."

A Postponed Party.

Mrs. H. had promised her 6-year-old son a birthday party, but when the time came she told him he would have to wait, because she was too busy to attend to it. The next week she was very ill and so it had to be postponed again. The following week he came in one morning looking rather tearful and said:

"Mother, can't I be born today?"

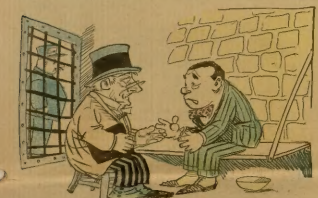
Means Nothing to Him.

"That man with whom you were discussing the high cost of living when I called has a mighty level head," remarked Mr. Dustin.

"No, I discovered the reason later."

"What was it?"

"He's a grocery clerk who works from seven o'clock in the morning until seven o'clock at night and then hurries home to help his wife look after the baby."



Lawyer—"Can you prove an alibi?"

Prisoner—"Why, no—that's up to you! You don't expect me to do it like a lawyer, do you?"

Absent-minded.

"Reckon, all things considered, that Dud Bucker is the most absent-minded gent in this community," said the landlord of the Petunia tavern. "Altho the railroad company moved its depot three years ago and put it about twenty rods up the track, and Dud has been leaning against it at frequent intervals ever since, the same as he did for years before, when it used to be situated right over with something on his mind every time he leaned against the place where the depot used to be and fall down and imagintate himself quite a good deal on a sharp rock!"—Judge.

Giving a Hint.

Scribb and his wife were going to the theater.

"Will you please go upstairs and get my goats off the dressing table?" asked Mrs. Scribb.

"Your goats!" queried the puzzled Scribb. "What newfangled idea have you women got now?"

"I'll show you!" snapped the wife. "Go upstairs at once and you shall see! Why, I call those goats my hats!"

"I used to," replied Mrs. Scribb, "but since you've got new ones and they are getting so old I am obliged to institute himself quite a good deal on a sharp rock!"—Judge.

Not Encouraging.

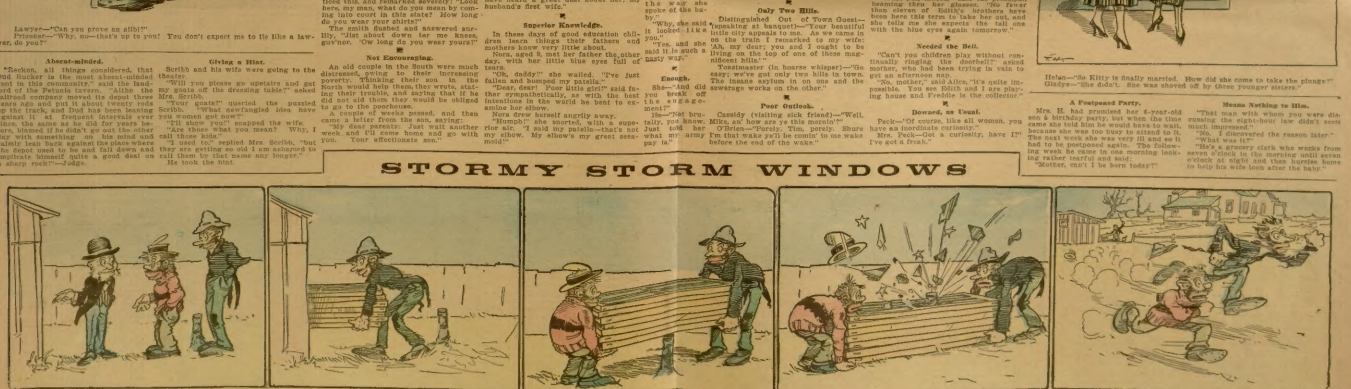
An old couple in the south were much distressed, owing to their increasing poverty, in thinking their son in the North would help them; they wrote, stating their trouble, and saying that if he did not aid them they would be obliged to go to the poorhouse.

A couple of weeks passed, and then came a letter from the son, saying:

"My dear parents: Just wait another week, and I'll come home and go with you. Your affectionate son."

Helen—"So Kitty is finally married. How did she come to take the plunge?"

Gladys—"She didn't. She was shoved off by three younger sisters."


STORMY STORM WINDOWS
Mr. Suburbs—"Winter is coming. The storm windows are in order, and while you are getting them out I will get the paint and you to paint them."
Slim Sidesaw—"That's right, we'll take um all at once an' git it over with, cus I hasn't strong far work nohow."
Shorty Singalong—"Well, sat um on the ole glide brings the paint well slather it on in about two shakes."
one side here, an' when
(Crash!) Slim—"You idiot, you pimple on the landscape! Why didn't you tell me that enamel?"
Shorty—"Why didn't you see it yersel', old pickle nose? Are ye blind?"
Slim—"I'm not so blind but I can see that we better beat it!"
Shorty—"Yes an' I'm goin' ter knock you wooden block off fer sic kin we've lost."

THE QUADROON'S HATE

Or, One Man's Folly

By Ella Martin

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CHAPTER X.

IN NEPHA'S ABSENCE.

NEVER!" repeated Nepha. "I owe Lloyd Charlston too much ever to forgive, or even to forego my revenge." She turned and walked up and down the room, the clinched hands. She tore at the throat of her dress as if she were choking. "You do not know how now I hate him! You have no idea of the insults he has heaped upon me.

"As a child he ill-treated me. But for Aunt Anna—my aunt as well as his, as she knew from my own father's confession—but for her, he would have driven me from the place. But when I grew to womanhood his feelings toward me changed. He looked upon me with lecherous eyes, and was a greater menace than ever. He pretended me with attentions [illegible] love to me in a way that sickened the soul within me. All that time I did not know that he was my father's son, and he did not dream that I was his half-sister. After all this, he dare ask me to forego my vengeance upon whom he has wronged so [illegible]

He is a bigamist, and a would-be murderer. I have the proofs of both. The prison gates yawn for him, and, so help me Heaven, they shall close behind him."

She paused as she saw that her sister was in a half-fainting condition, and sprang to her bedside.

"Lygia, my sister, forgive me!" she cried soothingly. "I had forgotten your feelings. Don't worry. Let us wait and see what time will bring forth. Charlston may consent to accept Cecil Lynd as his wife. You must get well before anything can be done. We will wait."

Lygia lifted herself and lay out in bed. "I do not love him any more; but for my boy's sake I do not want the world to learn of his treachery."

Nepha repressed the rebellious passion within her, and agreed to think of some way to escape the trouble. Lygia had been to drag Lloyd down from his lofty height, to expose him to the world, that it might hold him in contempt as he deserved. It was only justice. But her helpless sister and the equally helpless child stood between her and the revenge she had planned. However, she wrapped up the blood-stained garment and laid it carefully away. Then she went where no one she occupied while at Negro Jim's. Not even Lygia must know where it was hidden. And she knew the spring which she would hold over Lloyd's head—very lowered now. But he would suffer torture him, with her knowledge of his crimes as the instrument!

She returned and made Lygia comfortable, and then hunted up Chloe to inquire after Cecil Lynd. She found the negress in the kitchen, brewing herbs and mumbling to herself.

"What is it, Chloe?" she asked. "Is your patient worse? If so we must have a physician."

"Him won't hab no doctor, chile; he fight agin' it like de debil. He don't want no one to know he's alive. I 'spects he won't be long, if dat dar fever doan go down, honey."

"We must get a doctor, whether he wants one or not, Chloe. I can find one who will say nothing about having been here. We must get one, Chloe. Suppose he should die on our hands. We would have to explain satisfactorily to the authorities, under the circumstances."

The negress looked frightened. "Dat am a fact, honey; I neber done think about dat. Reckon I'll hab to make explanashion dat 'ar hisself."

Nepha left the house to find Mose and order the horse hitched to the spring wagon. This done, she visited the chamber of the sick man. She found him conscious and in a high state of fever and pain.

"It is only nights that I am feverish," he said, in answer to her inquiries. "It is nothing for you to worry about. I've seen the worst of it."

The fever may mean that the wound is infected, and we dare not neglect calling medical aid. The physician whom I shall bring you will respect your wishes as regards secrecy. I will guarantee that."

"If you will find my friend, Mr. Walters, and fetch him to me, it is all I ask," answered Cecil. "He will take all responsibility upon himself."

"Where shall I look for this Mr. Walters?" Nepha inquired.

"I do not know. He was to wait in town until I came. He has probably gone out to search for me by this time. You may be able to get track of him in some way."

"I will try," the quadroon said; "but if you should get worse I must call a physician."

"I am not going to die on your hands," he asserted. "If that is what you mean, I have work to do. I must learn the identity of my assailant and punish him."

Nepha's eyes snapped. But for her sister she would have furnished him with the information he craved.

"There are other things you wish to find out," she suggested. "I will bring you news from any source you wish, and keep my own counsel."

He gazed at her steadily for a moment, as if he would read her soul. "I will trust you," he agreed. "Tell me, if you can, whether a wedding took place last night at Hastings Place."

"Yes," she answered, slowly. "there was a wedding there last night."

A groan left the lips of Cecil Lynd. He closed his eyes, and Nepha feared he had fainted. She bathed his face and chafed his hands. When he opened his eyes again she asked:

"The wedding was between Lois Hastings and Lloyd Charlston. They were then the wrong bride. The exchange was made at the last moment, and he did not know it until the ceremony was over.

Some instinct told the quadroon that this explanation would be welcome, since the news of the wedding had affected him so strangely. His eyes flew to her face instantly. There were surprise, relief and eagerness in their depths.

"You will get better quickly now," she said.

"Yes; I shall need no doctor," he smiled. "Now, find Avon Walters, and my undying gratitude shall be yours."

Without another word the quadroon left him and sought Mose, who was in the yard hitching up the gray mule. His black, shiny face beamed with a smile, as he beheld the girl approaching. The young darky was partial to the quadroon, for always had a coin handy, and insisted on tipping him for every little favor. To do the negro boy justice he would do much for the money, with a little urging, and a few minutes later the quadroon rode into the road that led into the woods.

Cecil's car had been put away under a shed where it could not be seen by any chance passer-by, and the grass grew over the grassy road that led to the highway she looked for signs of auto tracks, but a heavy rain some hours after she had driven the car to the house in the woods had obliterated such marks as there might have been from the grass.

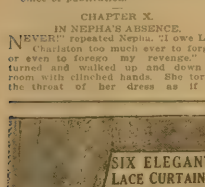
"There are none to miss the injured man," she mused, "but this Avon Walters, and I will search for him. He is no doubt. Let me see. If I learn of any one inquiring for Cecil Lynd, I will know it is he, and he will naturally go to Hastings Place to make inquiries."

She had satisfied herself that Charlston, the man she hated, had boasted that he intended marrying Ila to split Cecil Lynd's heart in twain. But Ila's visit to the Crossroads was to see Cecil. Charlston was obliged to pass the spot where Mr. Walters was waiting, on his way to the wedding, and there was little doubt in her mind that it was he who had injured Cecil.

"The villain!" she muttered, thru close-shut teeth, and gave the lines a smart slap upon the back of the gray mule, which increased his gait considerably. "I have evidence that would send him to prison for many years for attempted murder, and only Lygia's scruples stand between me and the revenge I have yearned for! Charlston has no right to be free! I feel the degradation of it yet. And since that time, until I was obliged to seek his companionship to save myself, he has made my life a hell!"

Her plump hands tightened over the lines, and once more the gray mule was made to feel the intensity of her emotions.

At that very moment the evidence against Charlston, which she had been at such pains to procure, namely, the



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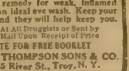

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dress shirt, with its minute spot of dried blood, was the immediate cause of humiliation. For after she had left her sister's room, the latter put the boy to sleep by nursing him at her breast. Then, raising herself cautiously, she worked her way out of bed until she sat upon the edge of it, her head resting on the homemade rug, her golden hair streaming over her white nightrobe. Her face now was pallid determined, her eyes large and bright.

When in health she was beautiful as a dream, but so unlike Nepha, with her dark eyes and hair and plump figure—tho she, too, was handsome in her way—that no one would have thought them children of the same mother. Being born of a mulatto woman, and each with a father belonging to a race as widely as they were, of course, of quarter blood. But tho Nepha was known as such, and was often referred to as the quadroon, those who knew nothing of Lycia's parentage would never have guessed that there was African blood in her veins, or that the two were half-sisters.

After a moment's rest Lygia stood upon her feet for the first time, then on her hands and knees and crawled to the door and out into the corridor. Her distracted mind had made no obtainable the telltale garment which she knew her sister had hidden in her own room.

"Nepha does not understand," she whispered. "She is bent on having revenge. She will not give it up. I cannot trust her. I must destroy the evidence of crime against the father of my boy. He must not be branded the child of a murderer, when he comes into his own—when, at his father's death, he reigns as master of Charlton Hall."

CHAPTER XI.

NEPHA'S MEETING WITH AVON.

AS NEPHA drove along the country road, she thought of many things connected with her strange, sad life existence. Her nature was morbid, and long-continued brooding had rendered her life unbearable. She was not willing to forego her revenge on the half-brother, whom she hated because he was entirely white, and who had been born with the blood of a race despised. But she saw things in the same light as her sister, despite the love she bore the enemy. Baby Lloyd must not begin his reign at the Hall under a cloud of disgrace, and plan to live down the name of his father without affecting the son. She must think of some other plan—concoct a plot that would bring her own ends in other way. In some manner he must be made to suffer as he deserved.

The girl's face was white as she had the upper hand, and she must torture him as his past treatment had tortured and humiliated her. Occasionally she drew breath sharply—she would bring about his death, that Lygia and her child might come into their own. As to this was it! Nothing but his death would satisfy her vengeful hatred. But first she would play with his cowardice—she still fear into his treacherous heart until she had paid him back in half. Such a plan was already in her mind, but she had no time to develop it now; she must be about the business of Cecil Lynd.

She lifted her head suddenly, and found that she was nearing the entrance to Charlton Place. The air was balmy, and the scent of blossoms was borne to her on the breeze. Across the several plantations of cotton within the range of her vision she could see dwellings nestled among lofty shade trees. One of these must be the home of Lygia, to which she was heir, morally, if not legally, equally with Lloyd Charlston.

Just at that moment the figure of a man came down the graveled driveway from Hastings Place and entered the road. He was a well-built man, and as far as she could tell from a distance, rather good-looking. Nepha at once jumped to the conclusion that this was the man she sought, coming from an interview with those whom he had a right to suppose could give him information concerning his friend and partner, Cecil Lynd. She concluded to drive on, and if he should turn in her direction, get out and speak to him. But if he went the other way she would drive faster and overtake him. As it happened he turned toward her, and he emerged from the driveway. She glanced up and down the dusty road. There was no one else in sight. This was what she desired.

The sun's rays had dried the moisture of the previous night, and the countryside was a pleasing sight to eyes tired of looking inward on turbulent passions. But only an occasional glance of appreciation did Nepha give the surrounding scenery. Her interest was centered on the approaching man, and when he came nearer she was convinced he was the man she sought. Giving another hasty look to the road, to make sure there was no one in sight, she pulled the mule up suddenly and waited.

The young man, who was now almost abreast of the rig, glanced keenly at her, lifting his hat as he saw she was about to speak.

"Ah," she said, eagerly, "you are he whom I seek. Are you—will you tell me your name?" She had suddenly remembered that she must not mention names until she was sure of his identity. Evidently he was of the same mind, for he hesitated.

"You are—I know you are Avon Watters!" she cried, his hesitancy betraying his reluctance to tell her his name.

"I plead guilty," he answered, smiling, and Nepha noticed, even in her agitation, the evenness of his white teeth. He wore a mustache, matching in color his brown eyes and hair, and about him clung the air of a Westerner.

"You were looking for me," he said, "then some one must have sent you in search of me. Quick, tell me of my friend!"

"Better still, I will take you to him. It was he who sent me. You know of whom I speak."

"Yes, I will trust you."

But neither mentioned the name of Cecil Lynd.

The quadroon made room for him beside her, and he sprang lightly into the rig. Turning in the direction from which the wagon around, then whipped up the mule. She was silent until they reached a point where the road was shaded, and pointed to the dense clump of trees and bushes, in the shadow of which Cecil's auto had stood.

"It was there I found him," she said tragically, pointing to the spot, "there by the wayside in the dust."

"Stabbed!" he echoed, his dark eyes widening. "My God!"

She drew nearer, while Avon stared at the place indicated, his face over his shoulder until she turned off the highway into the woods to the spot where the roads crossed each other was lost to view.

"My God!" he said again. "Who could have committed the dastardly deed?"

The quadroon did not answer. Her face was turned as being strange. This girl knew more than she had told him.

"Is he much injured?" he queried, finally.

"You shall judge for yourself soon," she replied, and then refused to have a physician. But I think he ought to be removed to a hospital at once. My brother-in-law is a doctor, and he will know what course to pursue. I guided the auto, with some difficulty, I own, into the woods, and found the injured man over to them. When he revived he asked us to say nothing of his presence there, but to bring you to look for you. And now I shall turn the responsibility over to you."

"Does he know from his assailant is?"

"No, nor can he even guess."

He regarded her keenly, his fine dark eyes lighted in the perfect contour of her face. Only for the fact that the skin shaded into olive next the edges of her hair, which was wavy, and even parted the strain of African blood, tho the dark hair was wavy, and the red lips a trifle full.

"A quadroon," he thought, "but a mighty good-looking one."

"But I am not," he continued, and their eyes met—both eager, scintillating. "You, perhaps, have a suspicion?"

"Who was with him, if you could find the man guilty of attacking your friend?"

"The law should punish him."

"But if I should find the man? If you were merely convinced—would you find a way to punish him secretly?"

Avon regarded her with keened eagerness, tho he had no key to her interest in the matter.

"How could I do that? Shall I fight a duel with him, and kill him, or maim him for life?"

"The very thing!" she agreed eagerly. They were making another turn now, and Nepha urged the mule to greater speed. Avon was silent with silence. He saw that she was not one to whom he could offer reward, and so he tried to

(Continued on Page 15.)

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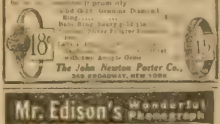

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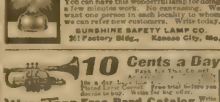

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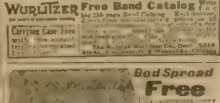

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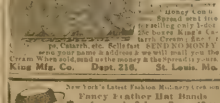

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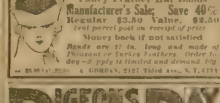

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Classified Want Ad Information

The rate for one insertion in Chicago Ledger and one insertion in The Saturday Blade is 30 cents a word, minimum 14 words, less 3% for cash. Each initial and group of figures is counted as a word, and the name and address are also counted. This is the minimum rate; neither more nor less is charged, irrespective of size of ad or number of insertions. An ad may appear in both publications of the same week, or in the Blade of one week and the Ledger of the next

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$250 FOR RELIABLE MAN OR WOMAN; distribute 5,000 free packages Borax Powder with Soaps, etc., in your town. No money or experience needed. B. W. Ward Co., 218 Institute Place, Chicago.

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Chicago Ledger

Entered as second-class matter June 25, 1879, at the postoffice at Chicago, Illinois, under act of March 3, 1879.

Published Every Saturday

By W. D. BOYCE CO., CHICAGO, ILL.

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Single subscriptions to the Chicago Ledger by mail $1.00 a year, 50 cents for six months, in advance. Remittances should be made by Bank Draft, Registered Letter, Postoffice or Express Money Order, payable to the Chicago Ledger. The address tab on your paper shows the date to which your subscription is paid.

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A quiet wedding may be but the calm before the storm.

A man with a small mind seldom has occasion to change it.

Bravery is reckoned by what we do, not by what we threaten.

He who borrows money of a relative never hears the last of it.

Fortunate is the man whose tastes are similar to those of his cook.

Necessity is the mother of invention; promotion is the stepfather.

A jeweler says pearls are like women—they require a lot of attention.

The fool with money to burn may drive an ash cart in after years.

When the star boarder marries his landlady he becomes a fixed star.

It's easier to approach luxuries than it is to back away from them again.

When ambition crawls in at the window contentment flies out at the door.

The "war of the union" began shortly after the marriage ceremony ended.

The less some women have to say, the more difficult it is for them not to say it.

Two women like to start a fuss and then leave their husbands to fight it out.

And the hand that displays an engagement ring never forgets its cunning.

And some men who are short on hair imagine that they are exceptionally long on brains.

Coffee is a bad thing for a man's temper, especially if his wife doesn't know how to make it.

Marriage is seldom a failure if neither party to the contract has any relations to interfere.

A penny saved may be a penny earned, but the one carried as a pocket piece doesn't draw interest.

It would take seventeen guardian angels and half a dozen policemen to keep some men out of trouble.

It isn't at all likely that a woman will ever discover that she's beautiful if she waits for another woman to tell her.

Men may be as deceitful as women in some things, but no man ever pretended to be having a good time when he wasn't.

"Contentment abides with the truth," says the old adage, but very few men are in a position to vouch for the truth of it.

The Quadroon's Hate.

(Continued from page 12.)

thank her for the rescue of Mr. Lynd, and added:

"What luck to find you so soon after leaving Hastings Place! It was my second visit there, and I could learn nothing."

"Yes, it was fortunate for both of us. It saved me a long search, perhaps, and did not know how to go about finding you."

"I think you did," he answered, and they both laughed.

At last the house among the trees loomed into sight, and Avon entered the blossom-bordered path to the front door, while Nepha drove around to the barn to turn the rig over to Jess. Cecil alighted immediately and ushered Avon into the house. Leaving him in the cozy sitting-room for a moment, she went to find Chloe, to whom she explained everything.

"Shoo', chile," Chloe said, after greeting the stranger in her characteristic way; "shoo', take de gentleman right up."

Nepha led the way to the second landing. "Here he is, sister, Chloe?" she asked, then.

"Worse, I fear, honey. I done foun' her in de corderoy outside yo' room in a daid faint. She looks dah jem faintin' spells eber since."

"My sister ill in her bed?" Nepha exclaimed. "No wonder she fainted. Outside my door, you said? I wonder—"

She did not wonder long, but knew. Lygia did not dare to trust her, and had sought to obtain and destroy the evidence of Charlston's crime, because he was her boy's father. She hurried past the negress and sought her sister's room. Lygia was lying there, pale and weak and pale. Her eyes, so starry in their brightness, looked out of a wan face, beautiful in color and expression. An appealing glance was all she vouchsafed Nepha, as she approached her bedside.

"Lygia!" Nepha could say no more, her emotions choked her.

"Nepha, sister, I am going to die," Lygia gasped faintly. "I feel it—I know it! Promise me——"

"Yes, yes!" Nepha assured her. "It shall be just as you say. It is all right. I know what you would ask." She turned in her excitement to Cecil, Jim's wife. "Chloe, will you bring something strengthening at once? See how weak and pale she is!"

Chloe left the room hurriedly, and Nepha bent over her sister's bed. "Lygia," she hurried, "you are not going to die. You must not! You must live to help me establish your son in his rightful place in his ancestral home. I will have you removed to a hospital in town, where you will be nursed back to health and strength. I will take care of the boy. Do not fear. It is not my plan to bring to light your husband's crime, and thus reproach you with the name of Charlston. But, dear, I must keep the evidence I have against him to coerce him into acknowledging you and the child. Tell me, did you find the evidence I had hidden?"

"No, I only got as far as the door, when I grew dizzy and fainted. Jim and his wife brought me back to my room."

"Be quiet after this, Lygia. You may trust me," Nepha said.

The next day Lygia was removed to a hospital in the nearest city. And Nepha took the child and returned to Charlston Hall. And her plan was forming in her mind. There would be a long, long struggle between herself and the master; but she would worry him night and day with the sword she held over his head, and she would win in the end, by fair means or foul.

The first step in the game was already taken, when she entered her apartments with the babe in her arms. Tho she occupied only three large rooms, one of them overlooking the river, she had, practically speaking, taken possession of the Hall in the name of its future master, Lloyd Charlston, Jr.

CHAPTER XII.

AT CECIL'S BEDSIDE.

As AVON entered the room where his friend lay among the snowy linen, which Chloe had laundered so carefully, he was struck with the pallor of the face turned toward him. A lump rose in his throat as he hurried to the bed with swift steps and took the invalid's hand.

"Ah, she found you!" Cecil said quickly. "I knew she would. She is a capable girl, that quadroon, tho there is a slumbering devil in her. I am glad she is my friend instead of my enemy."

"But I believe she can be trusted, once she is your friend," asserted Avon. "But how are you, Cecil? The quadroon told me but little."

"Better, old boy; but a long way from being able to get out of bed. And I am nearly wild to be up and doing. I wish I could reward Nepha, but she seems prosperous, and gives Mose, the son of these people, tips that make his eyes bulge with pleasure. However, we may have a chance to serve her some time."

"But tell me," Avon interrupted, "how you came to be in this plight."

"There isn't much to tell," answered Cecil. "I was waiting at the Crossroads in the shadow of some trees, for the moon was very bright. I was between hope and fear; I could not be sure that Ila had received the message. I don't know yet."

"I delivered it to her maid, all right. It was the best I could do. But go on."

"I thought I heard a motor car in the distance," continued Cecil, "but concluded it must have turned off the road into some byway, for suddenly I ceased to hear it. The truth is, most likely, that whoever was in that car sneaked out when I was on the other side; for suddenly a form loomed up over the side of my auto, and I was struck down and, I suppose, left for dead. The next I knew the quadroon had brought me here. No one except you knew of my presence in the country; so no one but you missed me. Therefore I could remain hidden here. As soon as I recover I will find out who attacked me. And, by Heaven, I will wring his dastardly neck!"

"If you want my help," Avon said heartily, "call upon me. I'd love to do it."

(Continued on Page 19.)

Iron Is Greatest of All Strength Builders, Says Doctor

A Secret of the Great Endurance and Power of Athletes

Ordinary Nuxated Iron Will Make Delicate, Nervous, Rundown People 200 Per Cent. Stronger in Two Weeks' Time in Many Cases.

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NOTE—Nuxated Iron recommended above by Dr. Sauer is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents is widely prescribed by eminent physicians everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion, as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The Nuxated Iron tablets have such great confidence in Nuxated organic iron that the manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated organic iron that the manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated organic iron that the manufacturers

Lone Scout Boys

Or, For Preparedness

By St. George Rathborne

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"ANYBODY hurt?" asked Abner Anderson as he allowed the light to pass hurriedly over first one and then another of his mates, all panting heavily from their exertions.

"He never touched me [illegible]," easped Chris. "I got a few scratches, out shucks! they don't amount to beans," admitted Wee Willie Winkle.

"Well, I got one clip from Carl's club," confessed Ad Porter, grumblingly, as he rubbed the back of his head, "and say, I guess if I hadn't been so close that I missed the full swing of his sweep I'd have been laid out. As it is, I feel the lump that's coming up right now, will spoil my hat on after this. But then I'd a heap sooner have that crack than get mangled by the old cat."

"We made a whopping time of it," remarked Luke. "I wonder what the scouts along the line, tied up on the railway thought had broken loose on them. I bet you they're running this way and that, and trying to figure it all out."

"What can't be cured must be endured," quoted Cliff Atwell, composedly, for as he had proceeded any injury because of the collision with the old catfish was very easily scraped a philosophical spirit and he could keep right along, Abner" asked Hi Henry.

"Of course," he was told.

"A little thing like this shouldn't block us off Wide Awake, now, should it?"

"The only thing I'm sorry about," continued the lanky Scout, in a complaining tone, "is that I didn't get a chance to shoot. I'd have shown that breezy old cat turn up his toes all right if I'd had half a chance; but I didn't, and was so mad I let go, for fear of hitting one of you fellows skipping about like flea."

"It's just as well you didn't, leader," soothingly. "Quite a little excitement while it lasted, but no particular damage done."

"You forget me, seems like," grunted Ad Porter, with the air of one who hugged a grievance to his heart. "A swelled head isn't the most comfortable thing going, let me tell you. And say, mebbe that action doesn't smart like fury when I apply it to the lump. Must have broken the skin, in the bargain. My head began to throb, and I'm afraid that I'm going to forge ahead with the [illegible]."

"Well, everybody keep quiet again," advised Abner Kent. "We've made a whole lot of racket as it is, and perhaps scared those men from trying to do their [illegible]."

"Oh, I hope not," said Hi Henry.

When I embark in a thing I like to see it thru with a whole heart."

Progress was immediately resumed, and by degrees the angry and baffled lynx gave up the idea of tackling them again, for his snarls grew fainter, until presently they ceased altogether. It was well for the Lone Scout boys that they found themselves easier when this last bugaboo ceased. The aggressive way in which Wee Willie and Hi Henry's women had dared assail could happen enemies had made a deep impression on their companions. Were circumstances enough, nor would that stirring little adventure be forgotten in a hurry by any of those who participated in the affair.

Sometimes the way was very rough. Once Wee Willie vanished entirely, and the others were left in doubt as to his whereabouts, fearing them not to go on and leave him in the lurch. Upon calling a halt and flashing their lights around that the small cousin of a Scout had slipped and fallen into a hole that lay like a trap alongside the railway.

Hi Henry lost no time in lying flat on the ground and reaching down his long [illegible] fellow, who was [illegible] helped out of the pit. He had been quite [illegible] of himself [illegible] jumps and [illegible] Then was good news for his comrades, because Wee Willie [illegible] and all of them would have been sorry indeed had harm befallen the youngster.

"I may have to limp a bit," confessed the victim of the trap, "because a rock jabbed me in the thigh as I fell, but I feel a little lame; but that's bound to [illegible] I can't help it. If [illegible] I'll be all right. Never [illegible] is worrying."

Soon I didn't see that any explained [illegible] to keep on [illegible] the [illegible] Trains [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

…o use his gun before he …derstood the case, Abner would …olly exposed to the fire. …d hear the men talking between …es, and one of them seemed to …e a humorous story, for he had …e other laughing. At least …e not in an unusually ugly …e boy thought.

…there!" he called softly, at …e two figures stopped talking …guns half raised seemed to be …there on top of the embank… …ing to see who it was had …n.

…ould not help thinking that …tion as soldiers had been neg…rnefully, for had they been …ne principles that underlie …ilding they would never have …e with their fingers so plainly …against the sky, so that an en…ould have found them an easy …

…right close by here, behind this …k, and I want to fetch you some …tion. I'm only a Lone Scout, you …d haven't any weapon with me. …come down here to me, both of …e very thankful I'll be not to …You can keep me covered if you …s I didn't risk my life to come …half and get you into the …of the bridge, and then mean to …r. Please come down here where …e can see so we're all alone, …e got some chums close by."

…ards heard this with more or …agement. At least one of them …ld to make of the singular re…ckily fearing some sort of trap. …he fact that they were armed, and …as certainly within voice call…g them in this strange fashion …to influence them.

…ally they started slowly down the …d the bank, keeping constantly on …rch for signs of treachery. Abner …d to speak, and somehow there …ave been something about his …and manner that impressed the …en, for a minute later they stood beside him, trying to make him out in the half-gloom.

"Who are you, and where did you come from?" demanded one of the guards.

"There's a Yankee touch to his voice, I do believe, Alec," observed the other, which remark at least showed him to be an observing chap.

"Yes, that's right," spoke up the boy, without hesitation. "I am from over the border. I belong to the Lone Scouts, which perhaps you know about. It lies just seven miles below the international boundary line. And I'm before, I am a Scout, the leader of our Tribe. My name is Abner Kent. With seven of my chums I came up to spend a week in camp, when by a singular accident we learned of a terrible scheme to blow up this bridge just when a big troop train that will pass along here tonight is on the trestle."

He was interrupted at this point by exclamations of astonishment on the part of the two guards. Abner more than half anticipated this, for it must surely have staggered their credulity to hear a boy so coolly declare that he and his friends had learned of a base plot to destroy the bridge after they crossed the border just to give warning, and frustrate the evil design of the schemers.

"This is a wonderful fairy tale you're giving us, lad," said one of the men.

"It is the truth, every word of it. I tell you on my honor as a Scout," the boy went on to say earnestly. "There are my comrades believe you'll find the same thing. Two men, one very large, and the other with a ratlike face, Herman and Peter, the latter a cripple, have left a lonely cabin south of the line an hour and more ago, to come up here and do the job. They have a satchel along some bombs that they said would shake the whole country for miles around. Oh! I know you believe me because we thought it our duty to come here and give you warning, so all of us together could think some way basic their plans. We were thinking more about the engineer and train crew than the bridge or the munitions."

He spoke this so fast as he could speak, thrilling them with the intensity of his utterance. Abner had a most convincing way about him, as his boy friends had always contended. It began to have an influence upon the guards, for their coming up there told them no boy would venture to undertake such a mission for the mere fun of playing a Scout game.

Then, besides, they must know what Canadian Scouts, as well as those on the other side, had been called upon in this great emergency by which their respective countries were faced. It was a time when every boy had to do his part into their own; when the papers teemed with instances telling of heroism by those of tender years.

"Go on and tell us more about this thing," urged the one who appeared to be some sort of noncommissioned officer, perhaps a corporal, and then undoubtedly exercised more or less authority over his companion guard.

This was what Abner wanted, a chance to explain further. Minutes might be precious, but then, if anything was to be done, it must be done by men placed in possession of all the facts in the case, to begin with.

Accordingly Abner plunged in to tell how he and his seven comrades had meant to camp in an old cabin not a great distance away, and how, during their ordinary line, and how upon finding it occupied, with a light streaming from a window, six of them had crawled near their Scout knowledge of woodcraft to creep up so as to investigate. Then followed what they had seen and heard, and heard, all told in rapid sentences and with few unnecessary words.

He must have thrilled his auditors to the core, judging from the low remarks with which they occasionally greeted some of his assertions. When the boy finally brought his narrative down to the point where the railroad bridge had been sighted he had fully converted both men. Then, without wasting even the least doubt with regard to the accuracy of his every statement.

"These are the facts we told," the spokesman told Abner, four on duty and the others in camp. The danger as you say all lies on this bridge. Now, what I will fetch the pair who are guarding the other approach to the trestle over to this side. Then one man can be sent for reinforcements, while we four our plans so as to corral the rascals."

Somehow Abner got the impression that the man who used to be in command of the bridge patrol must have seen service somewhere out in the Northwest country, because he was so breezy as of one accustomed to big distances, and the use of that one word "corral" suggested it. Perhaps a cowboy whom there were many hundreds in the stock-raising country, Abner knew.

The man gave a whistle, thrice repeated.

"That will fetch them across without fail," he remarked, evidently laboring under considerable excitement, for he realized that the crisis so long anticipated was at last upon them, with his chances of promotion bright, or it might be some dreadful fate hanging over his head.

Several minutes dragged by, during which the guard plied Abner with pointed questions, apparently bound to learn all he could about the two plotters. He gave no indication of knowing anything about either Herman or Peter, the the names possibly suggested to him that they might be German reservists out of a job, who, unable to cross over to join their regiments at the front, had decided to strike at the common enemy thru this underhanded dynamite route.

"I hope you mean to let us have a hand in trying to nab those men," said the boy, when at this time he discovered a couple of forms advancing along the trestle, having come from across the river. "My friends and myself have gone to a heap of trouble in this thing, and we'd feel pretty bad if you cut us out of some of the glory."

"That's all right, son," the sergeant told him, shaking hands in a warm manner. "You deserve to have a good share in the round-up for what you've done this night. I'm proud of you, I am, for you see I was born out in Dakota myself, so deep down I'm as much of an American as you are. We'll get all my men together, and you mention your seven Scouts. That ought to give me a squad big enough to rustle the dynamite boys with. We'll have 'em if we don't. And say, you chaps have done us a great favor, understand, which we'll never forget. We might have been caught napping, and blown the bridge down with the bridge and train."

He almost made Abner cry out with pain, so powerful was the hand so fiercely. But the arrival of the other two men served to distract the sergeant's attention, so that the boy was able to escape. He resolved never to be caught in that clutch again if he could help it.

Then an announcement of the seven-o'clock relay when they heard what was on the carpet. One of them was sent off to the farm where reinforcements were waiting after having been on duty eight hours at a shift. The messenger was instructed not to show unreasonable signs of extreme haste, so as to excite the suspicions of the plotters if meanwhile by chance they had come up. When a time came back with the other squad he was told to creep along at the foot of the embankment, exercising every care so as not to be seen.

"And now, Abner," said the sergeant, in a soft tone, after the man had left on his errand, "I suppose these chums of yours, the Lone Scouts, are ready to creep up and secretly help me drive in the enemy's outposts?"

Abner had hoped for just such a request. He had left word with his seven comrades in plain words and prepared to carry out the plan. who will send her name to Dr. J. H. Dye Medical Institute, Dept. 1, Dye Bldg., Buffalo, N. Y. Write for it today.

Thrilled by these words, the leader started down the embankment again, determined to show that he had left the seven. He found them there awaiting his return with more or less impatience, except for Jerry, who, it seems, had as usual actually gone to sleep, and was oblivious to all things occurring around him.

He quickly aroused when he caught the sound of approaching feet and secretly hoped none of the other fellows had noticed his disappearance. The Tribe leader acquainted them with what measure of success he had accompanied his mission, and then proceeded to lead them to the guards of the imperiled bridge.

CHAPTER XII
LYING IN WAIT.

WHEN they once more reached the spot where the guard had been left by Abner they found that other detachment had already been brought up. The sergeant was busy explaining the main facts to them, of course in the lowest possible tone.

Taken altogether they presented quite a formidable array, being sixteen in number, so that Abner felt sure they would have little or no difficulty in overcoming just two men. Some of the Scouts may have looked on the matter in this way, but Abner was wiser. He could not forget how these desperate men carried with them the means of destroying property, and knew full well that so long as this was in their possession it would be exceedingly risky to attempt their capture by force.

Now, Abner had been pondering the matter over in his serious fashion, and of course he had already hit upon a scheme that might be worked to advantage by the knowledge the sergeant was a sensible sort of fellow, the Scout

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leader determined to consult with him upon the matter.

Abner was wise beyond his years. He shrewdly realized that being in command of the bridge patrol the sergeant might be more or less "touchy" about having his subordinates understand that he was depending on a mere boy to advance bright ideas. But there was a simple way of getting around all that difficulty.

"If you don't mind, sir," he said to the noncommissioned officer. "I'd like to speak with you aside. I've got an idea you might like to hear, and I'm sure I'd be glad to have your advice."

Perhaps the other guessed intuitively what Abner meant, and just why he declined to speak out before the others. At any rate he manifested a willingness to meet his proposal. Accordingly they stepped off a few yards, so that their whispered exchange of confidence might not be heard, even by their comrades close at hand.

"It's just this way," began Abner; "those men are desperate rascals, and if suddenly set upon may do something terrible with that stuff they are carrying, you know."

"Just what I was thinking myself," returned the sergeant, quickly, evidently able to clutch a straw when he saw one floating near him.

"You know Scouts are always trying to figure out ways of getting what they want without taking undue risks," continued Abner, softly; "and in this case I've thought of a way it might be done, providing always that it strikes you as worth trying."

"Go on, let's hear the scheme; I'm already interested, son."

"Now supposing they know just how many men there are in the patrol, and find you all missing from your camp," explained the boy; "of course they'd suspect you were up to something, and might be that suspicious they'd postpone the job, or else sneak around and come up on the other side of the river, which would make things worse for us."

"Yes, that's true, enough, boy; keep right along explaining your scheme. Already I can half guess what it is, because my mind was running the same way."

Abner may have half doubted this, but he was not wily enough to show what line of thought he entertained just then. It was quite enough for him to know that the Canadian sergeant was ready to meet him halfway, and had proved himself amenable to reason.

"Well," continued Abner, "supposing now that all of you started a camp fire just beyond the bridge, and seemed to be having a jolly time playing cards and telling stories, as if you didn't dream there was an enemy on this side of the border line. If they came up and saw you all there, even counted noses, and believed that you were neglecting your duty, leaving the bridge unguarded, they'd be apt to get busy the sooner, wouldn't they?"

"Sure thing, son; proceed. It's getting quite lively, I'm telling you; and I do believe our minds run in exactly the same channel, after all."

"Meanwhile, we eight Scouts, whose presence here is entirely unsuspected by the plotters, can be hiding close to the trestle, and watching everything those men do. They will place their mines under the bridge and fix things so that the explosion can take place only when the train is halfway across. I know this, because I heard them tell all about it. And then, besides, you understand that men of their stamp never take more chances of being blown up themselves than they can help."

"Right again, Abner Kent. I can see that you're a natural born general. If belonging to the Scouts brings out qualities like that in a boy it's the finest movement that ever started like a prairie fire to sweep over the country. I reckon now you mean to jump these men in due time, eh, son?"

"Not in any too big a hurry, sir," Abner told him. "It goes without saying that they will hang around not far away so as to see what happens when that train goes out on the l... that they are followed and ... that you and your force can ... them. But before the arrest is ... there is another piece of work ... be done, sir."

"You mean rendering the ... harmless, I take it, son?"

"That's it, sir," said Abner, ... as the wires which they will ... the track remain, there will be ... something happening after all ... they plan to have the wheels ... give them the connection at ... point far across there toward ... side. I'll see to it that the ... and all danger from that sour... But how about it, sir; does it ... as being worth trying?"

"I agree with my plans exactly," asserted the sergeant, without the ... est sign of hesitation. "And ... men must be getting pretty clos... now, perhaps we'd better mosey ... bit, and start that camp fire."

This unusual story will be co... in the next issue of the Ledger. ... the coming months many great ... will appear in these columns. ... are not already a subscriber f... paper, it will repay you to sen... year's subscription. It costs ... $1.00, and you will never regret ... us hear from you at once.

Ruptured?—
Throw Away Your Truss

For Many Years We Have Been Telling You That No Truss Will Ever Help You---We Have Told You the Harm Trusses Are Doing. We Have Told You That the Only Truly Comfortable and Scientific Device for Holding Rupture is the Brooks Rupture Appliance---and That It Is

Sent on Trial to Prove It

If you have tried most everything else, come to me. Where others fail is where I have my greatest success. Send attached coupon today and I will send you free my illustrated book on Rupture and the Appliance and giving you prices and names of many people who have tried it and were cured. It is instant relief when all others fail. Remember, I use no salves, no harness, no lies.

I send on trial to prove what I say is true. You are the judge and once having seen my illustrated book and read it you will be as enthusiastic as my hundreds of patients whose letters you can also read. Fill out free coupon below and mail today. It's well worth your time whether you try my Appliance or not.

The above is C. E. Brooks, Inventor of the Appliance, who cured himself and who is now giving others the benefit of his experience. If ruptured, write him today, at Marshall, Mich.

Pennsylvania Man Thankful

Mr C E Brooks,
Marshall, Mich

Dear Sir:—

Perhaps it will interest you to know that I have been ruptured six years and have always had trouble with it till I got your Appliance it is very easy to wear, fits neat and snug, and is not in the way at any times. I may say in fact, at times I did not know I had it on; it just adapted itself to the shape of the body and seemed to be a part of the body, as it clung to the spot, no matter what position I was in.

It would be a veritable God-send to the unfortunate who suffers from rupture if all could procure the Brooks Rupture Appliance and wear it They would certainly never regret it.

My rupture is now all healed up and nothing more did I have to use Appliance. Whenever the opportunity presents itself I will say a good word for your Appliance, and also the honorable way in which you deal with ruptured people. It is a pleasure to recommend a good thing among your friends or strangers. I am,

Yours very sincerely,
JAMES A. BRITTON.
80 Spring St., Bethlehem, Pa.

Confederate Veteran Cured

Commerce, Ga., R. F. D. No. 11.

Mr. C. E. Brooks,—

Dear Sir:—I am glad to tell you that I am now sound and well and can plough or do any heavy work. I can say your Appliance has effected a permanent cure. Before getting your Appliance I was in a terrible condition and had given up all hope of ever being any better. If it hadn't been for your Appliance I would never have been cured. I am sixty-eight years old and served three years in Eckle's Artillery, Oglethorpe Co. I hope God will reward you for the good you are doing for suffering humanity.

Yours sincerely,
H. D. BANKS.

Others Failed But the Appliance Cured

Mr. C. E. Brooks,
Marshall, Mich.

Dear Sir:—

Your Appliance did all you claim for the little boy and more, for it cured him sound and well. We let him wear it for about a year in all, although it cured him 3 months after he had begun to wear it. We had tried several other remedies and got no relief, and I shall certainly recommend it to friends, for we surely owe it to you. Yours respectfully,

WM. PATTERSON,
No. 717 S. Main St., Akron, O.

Remember

I send my Appliance on trial to prove what I say is true. You are to be the judge. Fill out free coupon below and mail today.

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1. It is absolutely the only ... ance of the kind on the market ... and in it are embodied the pr... for that inventors have sought ... years.

2. The Appliance for retaining ... rupture cannot be thrown out ... tion.

3. Being an air cushion of ... ber it clings closely to the ... never blisters or causes irritation.

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5. It is small, soft and pli... positively cannot be detected ... the clothing.

6. The soft, pliable bands h... Appliance do not give one the unpleasant sensation of wearing a har...

7. There is nothing about ... foul, and when it becomes soiled it can be washed without injuring ... least.

8. There are no metal springs in the Appliance to torture one by ... and bruising the flesh.

9. All of the material of which the Appliances are made is of the very best that money can buy, making it a durable and safe Appliance to wear.

10. The reputation for honesty and fair dealing is so thoroughly established by an experience of over thirty years of dealing with the public, that my prices are so reasonable, my terms so fair, that there certainly should be no hesitancy in sending a free coupon today.

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Dear Sir:—The baby is altogether cured, thanks to your Appliance and the treatment. If we could only have known of your little boy would not have had to suffer near as much as he did. We have ... brace a little over four ... Yours truly,
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...NBERGER.

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Mr. C. E. BROOKS,
316 State St., Marshall, Mich.

Please send me by mail in plain wrapper your illustrated book and full information about your Appliance for the cure of rupture.

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Address .....

R. F. D. ..... City ..... State .....

adroon's Hate.

ued From Page 15.)

deed. But at present you compose yourself or you get the chance. These colean well, but you must ed medical attention you ed to a hospital at once." at very moment that Neyoon, was influencing her to be taken to a hospital. she passed the open door m. Two men caught ad called to her to enter. d the bed with a serious h a kindly look in her

thank you for all you have including your search for He will take charge of me told her.

shing," replied the quadroon; to do for

ling to save my life? Well, isn't worth much. But I go to get you, my lady. to settle with some one

ou will settle it," she re- eyes burning with the "Say, if I ferret out the ill you do the rest?"

I will! Just find the villain,

ll you do it?" she interrupted. kill him?" Her eyes were ullating.

ilted between his teeth, shoulder inciting him to aner, "I will kill him!" uation leaped the bar but suddenly her face will not do it," she said. commit murder under ation. Neither would I; that is still living."

nan regarded her curiously. tragedy in her face. They her hatred, but they could not her to do it. They under- her words that she knew who in was, or that she suspected whom she hated. Finally Avon said lightly:

m from the West, and not too h shoot daylight thru any one on your camnity, just out of for what you have done for here. Just trot forth your enemy and Cecil's is mine!" no trouble at all to befriend fit has an experience. But your offer to kill our mutual me. Only, it must be done in help a duel, I mean—that be a chance to defend himself, should have the crime of murr your skirts."

ver mind a little thing like quadroon, practically. enjy half in earnest," said the you that if you will point out to me who utte ted the life of Mr. Lynd, will you not? Or are you for second instead of invoking the law?"

"Indeed I will," answered, unhesitatingly. "And kill him, if I can!" And Nepha knew he was in earnest this time.

"Oh, you can kill him, easily! A man

THE DRINKING OF WATER

M. C. LUCAS, M. D.)

The Gen cal conclusions of the latest is picture ntists proves that drinking f pure water that is between and a two meals is beneficial to health. It has also been proven by means of t the X-rays and actual tests drinking of upon many that the water with meals is not harmful to digestion. Those suffering from a cold which will find great benefit in adding about 10 grains (one drop of half a level teaspoonful) of baki soda to each glass of water, drunk hour before meals. Such as are inclined to each meal. hyper-acidity should avoid drinking medium cold water, two hours after meals. If you ever suffer from headache, lumbago or any of the kidney trouble—such as symptoms of urine, sediment in urine, deep colored getting out of frequently, backache, and other troublesome effects, take a pint of hot water and a little Anuric before breakfast. Anuric can be obmeals. These tained at any drug store and were first discovered by Dr. Pierce.

American men and women must guard constantly against kidney trouble, because we eat too much and all our food is rich. Our blood is filled with uric acid which the kidneys strive to filter out, they weaken from overwork, become sluggish, the eliminative tissues clog and the result is kidney trouble, bladder weakness and often the poison reaches the tissues, causing rheumatism and gout.

When your kidneys feel like lumps of lead, when your back hurts or the urine is cloudy, full of sediment, or you are obliged to seek relief two or three times during the night, when you suffer with sick headache or dizzy, nervous spells, acid stomach, or you have rheumatism when the weather is bad, ask your druggist for Anuric. They have found in practice that Anuric is more potent than lithia and in most cases it will dissolve the uric acid as hot water does sugar. ***

who will bully a woman is at heart a coward. I hope to carry him your challenge some day."

"Leave him to my vengeance," Cecil insisted. "I can't permit any one to pay the debt I owe him. Give me his name, girl!"

"You are getting excited," she said soothingly, bending over him and straightening the pillows. "It is my debt, as well as yours; and I have a prior claim to mete out punishment. If you shall know the name of the man when you have fully recovered. We must not discuss the matter now you are getting feverish. I must leave you, as the ambulance to take my sister to the hospital will be here soon. Mose will deliver any message which you may wish to send me."

Avon was standing by the window now, gazing out upon the yard with its background of trees. He turned and said: "We, also, shall leave this place. I am going to take my friend to a hospital in Richmond. I was speaking to him about it before you came in."

At that moment Chloe's ample proportions filled the doorway. Her shiny black face wore a smile, and in her fat hands she carried a bowl of chicken broth for her patient. Nepha took advantage of this occasion to slip away. And a little later Avon took leave of his friend and was driven back to town by Mose, the colored boy.

As soon as arrangements could be made Cecil was removed from Negro Jim's domicile in the forest. Once at a hospital, Cecil placed in the hands of a surgeon, Avon felt relieved. He had not forgotten the anxiety of Mr. Hastings, but he could not report on Cecil's case until his friends consent, and he dared not tell him of Ila's condition until he was out of danger himself. As far as Mr. Hastings' feelings were concerned, he did not worry. He had brought the trouble upon himself.

As soon as the surgeon had examined Cecil's wound, he reported to Avon, who had awaited him in the reception-room. He was a small, dark man, with a mustache and tapering chin beard. His keen eyes rested on Avon's face. The latter rose to his feet.

"What is your verdict, Doctor?" he asked.

The physician hesitated, rubbed his hands together, then spoke: "There is no great danger. The ball is past the wound, and it will be some time before it is entirely healed. It was the pus that caused the fever. Ha-di not the proper attention soon enough. The wound has been dressed, and the patient is resting. In three weeks we will have him out of here."

Avon turned away with a sigh. Three weeks! He thought Cecil might be dead. Even so, it could not be helped. Cecil must be well and strong before he went to her. His present condition of mind she would be unable to recognize him. Somehow the strength of Cecil's love for the situation worried him greatly. His meeting with Lois, if she were refusal to marry him, had agitated him, also. But that was a chapter in his life he had closed forever. It must not resurrect it now. There were enough duties pressing upon him than to think of the past and his own blasted hopes. As soon as he was permitted to do so Cecil would be free to leave the nurse withdrew and left the two alone together.

"Well, old top," Avon began, "you are going to come out all right, the Doctor tells me."

"Yes," answered Cecil, "but I must lie here for weeks, perhaps, and meantime things may happen. What do you suppose Nepha Saladin has done with the appointed time?"

"Circumstances, no doubt," Avon replied, striving to jest, for of course he could not tell the truth.

"I have learned one thing. It was not Ila, my sister, Lola, who was married to Lloyd Charlston that night."

"What!" The word came quick and sharp from the lips of Cecil Hastings. His eyes came back to his companion's face in one swift, penetrating glance.

"Nepha stated it from memory."

Abruptly the other turned and walked to the window. For a time he stood there, looking out, but his mind was not on his friend. He had expected her to marry sometime. Why should it be such a bitter blow to him?

"Avon," said a voice from the bed, "there is something I want you to do for me. I must find out more about Ila. Go to Hastings Hall, tell you, or learn, if you can, why Ila, the she did not marry Charlston, yet failed to keep tryst with me. Find out everything you can."

A pain, sharp and stabbing, like a knife, went thru the heart of Avon Walters. Ila, the too beautiful, the false! But Cecil did not know of his love for Lois Hastings.

"I will go," he said, after a moment's reflection, "in some way I will find out all you wish to know. Do not look for my return immediately, though. We are some distance from the town near Hastings."

"But you can write."

"Yes." Avon assented, and took his departure reluctantly.

In the corridor outside he came face to face with Nepha, the quadroon. "I must see Mr. Lynd at once!" she cried.

"It cannot be, if you have news that will agitate him. You must wait for that until he is entirely well."

"It may be too late, then," said the quadroon.

This strange story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

His Share.

Billy glowed with rapture. He had won the girl of his heart, and in the sanctity of his bed sitting-room he was discussing his rosy prospects with a friend.

"Tea," he said, while his shirt front expanded many inches: "I think Molly and I are starting married life under the coolest auspices. Her father is giving us a little creeper-clad cottage, her mother will furnish it for us, her grandfather is giving us a cow and hens, in addition to this, Molly has a snug little income of her own."

"Excellent!" said his friend, inspired by the young man's enthusiasm. "And you—what are you bringing to the happy union?"

"Me? Oh—er—I'm giving my name!"

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"I pledge my allegiance to my flag and the nation for which it stands, with liberty and justice for all. I will 'Do a Useful Thing Each Day' and be worthy of the name, Lone Scout."

The Lone Scouts of America was incorporated in Washington, District of Columbia, in 1915. At the first meeting of the Incorporators, by-laws were adopted and W. D. Boyce was elected Chief Totem of the organization.

"The first Lone Scout took the pledge on October 24th, 1915. Now there are Lone Scouts in every State in the United States, every Province in Canada, Alaska, Panama Canal Zone, Republic of Panama, Porto Rico, Cuba, Hawaiian Islands, Philippine Islands and other parts of the world.

(Lone Scout Lone Scouts of America is for all wide awake, ambitious boys everywhere. It is not a military organization. It is a money-making proposition. There are no membership fees or dues to pay. There is no expensive equipment for boys or their parents to buy. The organization is supported by the advertising in its weekly magazine, "Lone Scout," in which instructions are given to the Scouts. "Lone Scout" is sold by news agents for 5 cents a copy. Subscription rates, 25 cents four months, 75 cents a year.

The motto of the Lone Scouts of America is: "Do a Useful Thing Each Day." Every boy who lives up to the Lone Scout motto is going to be a successful man. The purpose of the Lone Scouts of America is to give the boys of the country all the Boy Scout training which was started in the United States by W. D. Boyce, Chief Totem of the Lone Scouts, while permitting them to work alone if it is not convenient for them to belong to Tribes. Wood-craft and scouting are only a part of the instructions in the Lone Scouts of America.

The Lone Scout pledge is so worded as to make the organization world-wide in its existence. Any boy living on or some other flag than the United States flag. The Lone Scout must be in the best of health and physical condition all of the time. He must be a real friend. He take any drink containing alcohol, or smoke cigarettes.

Any boy who can understand the pledge is eligible to membership. As a membership is gained, Scout work he is awarded Degrees, with appropriate Badges, and these Degrees make up Lodges. The First Degree is Lone Scout, the emblem of which is a bronze badge bearing the figure of the Lone Scout Indian; Second is the Woodcraft Degree, the emblem of which is a bronze badge shewing the Crossed Logs of the Council Fire; Third Degree is Lone Eagle and the eagle is also on the silver badge of the Degree, the last of the Tepee Lodge. Next comes the Totem Pole Lodge, in which every member is entitled to put up a Scout Totem Pole, upon which is a record of his achievements for many Degrees.

In applying for Membership, fill out the Application Blank given below, and send it with 2-cent stamp.

W. D. BOYCE, Chief Totem,

500 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

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CHIEF TOTEM, 500 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

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I am ready, with consent of my parents or guardian, to take the Lone Scout Pledge, which I have read. Herewith find 2 cents in stamps to pay for mailing Certificate of Membership in the Lone Scouts of America, First Degree Instructions and Tribe Booklet.

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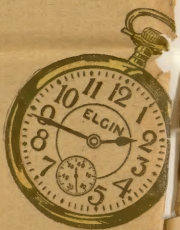

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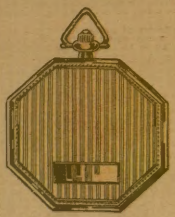

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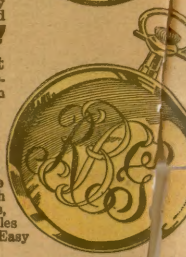

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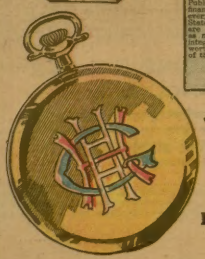

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